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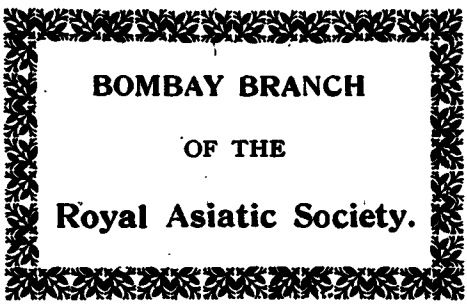

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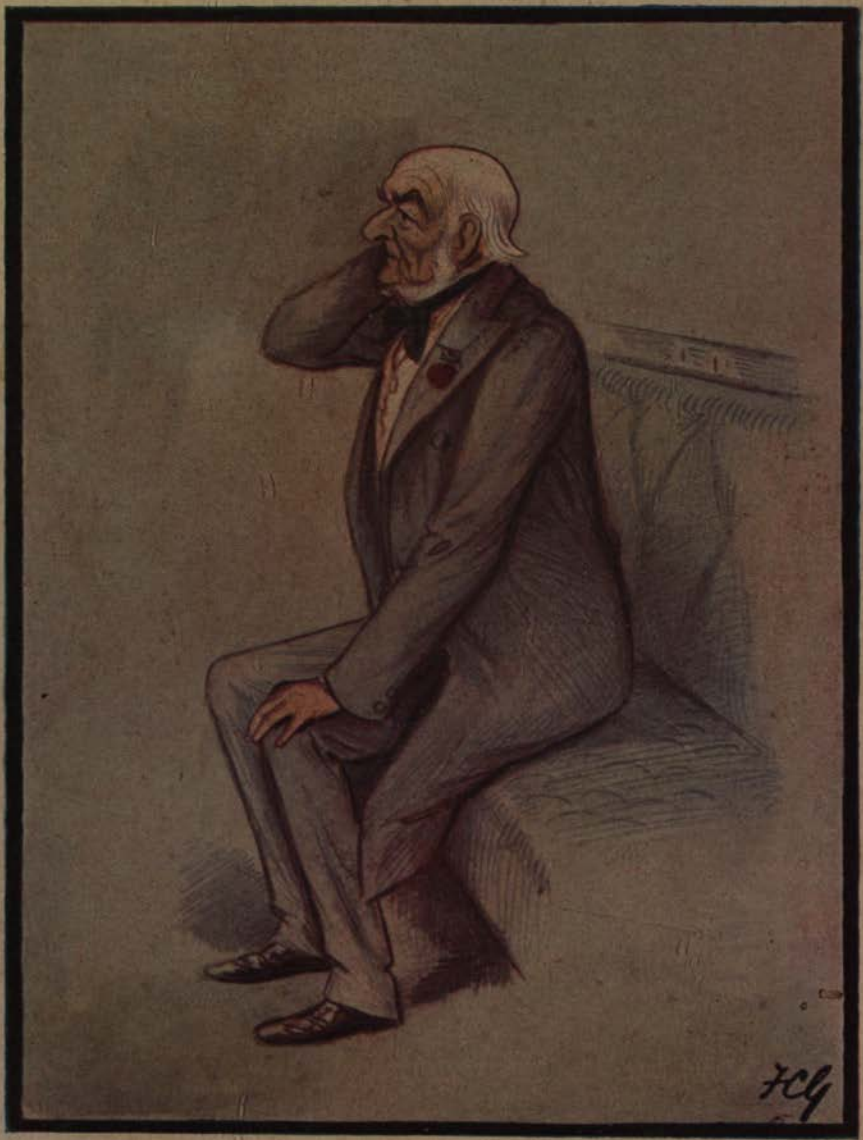

"AY?"

PEEPS AT PARLIAMENT

TAKEN FROM BEHIND THE SPEAKER'S CHAIR

By HENRY W. LUCY

ILLUSTRATED BY
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TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM COURT GULLY

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED

WITH PROFOUND RESPECT AND WARM ESTEEM

REFORM CLUB, *July* 1903

"It is of the essence of these memoirs not to soften or tone down judgments by the light of altered convictions, but to leave them standing as contemporary evidence of what was thought at the time they were written."—*Author's note to the Greville Memoirs.*

PEEPS AT PARLIAMENT

SESSION 1893

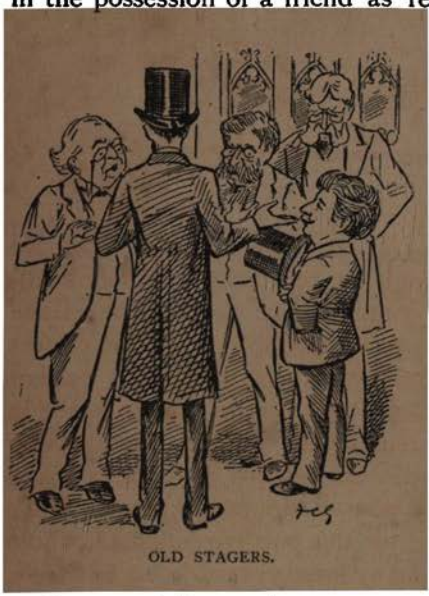
CHAPTER I

JANUARY

HEU FUGACES! It is just twenty years, marked by the opening Session, since I first had the opportunity of viewing the House of Commons from a coign of vantage behind the Speaker's Chair. It is more than twenty years since I looked on the place with opportunity for closely studying it. But, as I am reminded by an inscription in an old rare copy of "Dod," it was in February 1873 that I was installed in the Press Gallery in charge of the Parliamentary business of a great daily paper.

I first saw the House in circumstances that might well have led me to the Clock Tower. It was in the spring of 1869. I was passing through London, on my way to Paris, where I had proposed to myself to live for a year, master the language, and proceed thence to other capitals of Europe, learn their tongues, and return to storm the journalistic citadel in London, armed with polyglot accomplishments. Even then I had a strong drawing towards the House of Commons, but desired to see it, not as the ordinary stranger beheld it from the gallery facing the Chair, but from the Press Gallery itself.

In those days the adventure was far more difficult than in existing circumstances. The country Press was not represented save vicariously in the form of a rare London correspondent, who wrote a weekly letter for some phenomenally enterprising county paper. The aggregate of the London staffs was far smaller than at present, and was, it struck me at the time, composed almost exclusively of elderly gentlemen. The chances of detection of an unauthorised stranger (being, moreover, a beardless youth) were accordingly increased. But I was determined to see the House from behind the Speaker's Chair, and was happy in the possession of a friend as reckless as myself. He was on the staff of a morning journal, and, though not a gallery man, knew most of the confraternity.



OLD STAGERS.

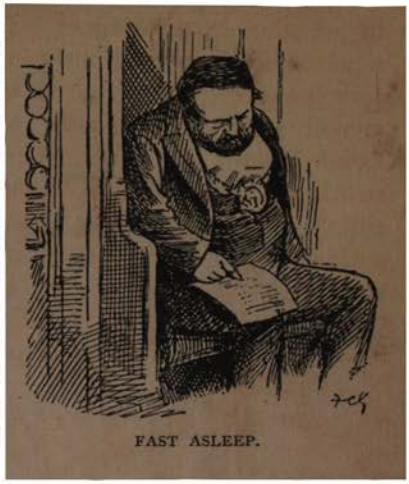
One night he took me down to the gallery and endeavoured to induce more than one of the old stagers to pilot me in. They stared aghast at the proposal, and walked hurriedly away. We were permitted to stand at the glass door giving entrance to the gallery and peer upon the House, which struck me as being very empty. The door swung easily to and fro as the men passed in and out, taking their turn. The temptation proved irresistible.

"I think I'll go in," I said.

"Very well," dear old Walter Wood hoarsely whispered. "Turn sharp to the right, sit down on a back bench, and I daresay no one will notice you."

At the corner of the bench, presumably guarding the doorway, sat a portly gentleman in evening dress, with a

gold badge slung across his abundant shirt front. He was fast asleep, and I passed along the bench, sitting down midway. At that time there were no desks in front of these back benches, which were tenantless. I suppose my heart beat tumultuously, but I sat there with apparent composure. At length I had reached the House of Commons, and eagerly gazed upon it, feeling like some watcher of the skies when a new planet swims into his ken;



FAST ASLEEP.

Or like stout Cortez when, with eagle eyes,
He stared at the Pacific.

I don't know how long I sat there; probably not five minutes, certainly long enough to be struck with the smallness of the chamber, the commonplace appearance of the personages forming the historic assembly, and the perfect manner in which they dissembled their interest in current proceedings. Then I became conscious of a movement in the sunken boxes before me, where the reporters, taking their turn, sat. Heads were turned and whispered consultations took place. Some one woke up the portly gentleman, whom through many later years I knew as Steele, the chief janitor of the Press Gallery.

ROSES.

In time, then far off, he became the possessor of a cottage and garden in Kent, whither, wearied with his legislative labours, he used to retire from Saturday to Monday. In summer-time he always brought me two or three roses, which he put in my hand with an awkward sort of flap, as if they were a slice

of bacon he was depositing on a counter. That was his way of intimating that it was of no consequence. He noticed that I always comforted myself through long debates and all-night sittings with a handful of flowers set in a little glass on my desk—which was generally upset in the course of the evening by some unsympathetic reporter borrowing my box during a temporary absence, and clumsily turning round in the circumscribed space.

"GET OUT!"

But that is another story. It was no flowers that Steele now brought me, but stern peremptory command to "get out!" He was unusually irate, first at having been wakened out of his sleep, secondly at having in probably unique circumstances been caught napping at the post of duty. I went forth disconsolate, and there was a great hubbub in the dark little room outside. My friend and co-conspirator fled in affright when he saw me actually enter the gallery. Now he dropped in in a casual way, and stood at the edge of the crowd whilst Steele took down my name and address, and told me I should "hear from the Serjeant-at-Arms."

I don't know whether that potentate ever communicated with me. I fancy Steele, recognising his own somewhat imperilled position, was not anxious to pursue the matter. Anyhow, I never heard from the Serjeant-at-Arms. Walter Wood and I agreed, as a matter of precaution, that I had better hasten my departure for Paris, and two days later the English Channel rolled between me and the Clock Tower.

Next time I entered the Press Gallery it was as the accredited representative of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. I came over from Paris to spend Christmas at home, and never

went back to complete that continental tour in search of knowledge, which I fancy had been suggested by Goldsmith's trip with his flute. It happened that in the early days of 1870, the proprietor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* began the first of the series of chequered changes in the history of the journal, by starting it as a morning paper. I had been an occasional contributor in a humble way to the evening edition, and thought I might have a chance of an appointment on the staff of the new morning paper.

Mentioning this to my friend Walter, he undertook to see it through, just as he had fallen in with the even more audacious proposal to enter the Press Gallery. I remember we were not far off Northumberland Street when the subject was broached, and might easily have walked there. But Walter could never embark upon enterprises of this kind unless he went in a cab, the driver being incited to go at topmost speed.

OUTSIDE THE *PALL MALL* OFFICE.

He left me in the cab whilst he ran upstairs to the office in Northumberland Street—I saw him going two steps at a time—and flung himself into the office of Mr. Fyffe, an old and highly-esteemed member of the *Times* staff, who had joined Mr. Frederick Greenwood in the editorial direction of the new development of the *Pall Mall*. What Walter said to Fyffe I never learned in detail, but subsequently had reason to guess he told him he had in the cab downstairs a young fellow who was (or would be) one of the wonders of the journalistic world, and that the morning edition of the *Pall Mall* would have no chance unless it secured his services.

However it came about—whether Fyffe had some work

in hand and was anxious to be relieved from the embarrassing presence of his visitor bounding all over the room in the enthusiasm of his advocacy, or whether, as usually happens with a new paper, choice was limited—I was engaged then and there as assistant sub-editor at the salary of four guineas a week. I believe the regular average rate of remuneration was five guineas. But I was young and inexperienced; and after living in the Quartier Latin for nearly a year on fifteenpence a day, cultivating French literature on *petits noirs*, four guineas a week was a competency. "*Trois de café*" is what Daudet in his *Trente Ans de Paris* calls this sip of nectar. "*C'est à dire*," he explains, "*pour trois sous d'un café savoureux balsamique raisonnablement édulcoré.*" But Daudet must have frequented aristocratic quarters. At our *crèmerie* we never paid more than two sous, when, bent on attaining luxury, we demanded "*un petit noir.*"

When the paper started, Mr. Fyffe did the Parliamentary summary, of which the *Pall Mall* made a feature, placing it on the leader page. One afternoon, after I had been on the staff for some six weeks, I looked in at the office, and found it in a state of consternation. Fyffe had been suddenly taken ill, and it was impossible for him to go down to the House to do the summary. Mr. Greenwood sent for me and asked me to take his place, for that night at least. To go down to the House of Commons and take an ordinary "turn" of reporting for the first time is, I suppose, a trying thing. To be bundled off at an hour's notice to fill the place of one of the most eminent Parliamentary writers of the day, and to supply a leading article on a subject of the surroundings of which one was absolutely ignorant, might seem appalling. It all came very naturally to me. I did my best in the strange, somewhat bewildering, circumstances, and as long as the morning edition of the *Pall Mall* lasted I continued to write its summary. Fyffe came round again in a week; but he never more took up the summary, leaving it in my hands, with many words of kind encouragement.

It was in October 1872 I joined the staff of the *Daily News*, having, under Mr. Robinson's watchful eye, gone through a period of probation as contributor of occasional articles descriptive of current events. I might, in the ordinary course of events, have continued in that line. But here again chance befell and irresistibly led me back to the Press Gallery. In this very year a change took place in a long-standing management of the *Daily News* Parliamentary corps and the writing of its summary, and Mr. Robinson designated me as successor of the gentleman who retired. It was a curious and, in some respects, a delicate position, seeing that I was, compared with some members of the staff, a mere chicken in point of age. There were three who had been on the paper since it started, any one of whom might, had Fortune favoured me in that direction, have been my grandfather. But we got along admirably, they easing my path with kindly counsel and the friendliest consideration.

MR. ROBINSON.

It was different with some of the old hands on the other corps, who bitterly resented the intrusion. I am not quite sure whether the two or three who still survive have got over it yet. Certainly old "Charlie" Ross, then and for some years after manager of the *Times* staff, carried the feeling to his honoured grave. After I had sat next but one to him in the gallery for many Sessions he used, on encountering me in the passage, to greet me with a startled expression, as if I were once more

THREE OLD MEN.

an intruder, and would walk back to the outer doorkeeper (whom he autocratically called Smeeth, because his name was Wright) to loudly ask, "Who's that?"

Old Ross's personal affront in this matter probably dated back to the Session of 1872, when I took an occasional turn for a friend who was a member of his staff. This was young Latimer, son of the proprietor of the *Western Daily Mercury*, who had been called to the Bar and occasionally got a brief on the Western Circuit. When he went out of town I became his substitute in respect of his Parliamentary duties. It was Mr. Ross's custom of an afternoon to seat himself on the bench in the ante-chamber of the Press Gallery, armed with a copy of the *Times* report of the day, with the "turns" all marked with the name of the man who had written them. He genially spent the morning in reading the prodigious collocation in search of errors. When found, these were made a note of, the guilty person was sent for and had a more or less pleasant quarter of an hour. This was called being "on the gridiron."

I had only one experience of the process. Seated one day by command beside this terrible old gentleman, he produced the marked passage containing one of my turns, and pointing to the name, Mr. Ward Hunt, fixed a glowering eye on me and said, with his slow intonation—

"Who is 'Mr. Ward Hunt'?"

"He is the member for North Northamptonshire," I timidly replied.

"Oh!" he said witheringly, "that's whom you mean. 'Ward Hunt'! Let me tell you, sir, Ward Hunt may do very well for the penny papers, but in the *Times* report we write 'Mr. W. Hunt.'"

I don't know why this should have been, since the burly gentleman, who in the next Parliament was Chancellor of the Exchequer, was invariably called by his full style. But then, as I have said, nobody knew why old "Charlie" Ross dubbed Wright Smith, and pronounced it Smeeth.

Gentlemen of the Press Gallery who now live at Westminster at ease, with their library, their smoking-room, their

choice of writing-out rooms, their admirably-appointed and self-administered commissariat department, little know the state of things that existed twenty years ago. Committee Room No. 18 had then recently been appointed to their use as a writing-room, providing it were not, when the House met, still in the occupation of a Committee. But the writing-out rooms originally apportioned, and then still in constant use, were two dark, ill-ventilated dens which served as ante-chambers from the Press Gallery. The *Times* staff appropriated the room to the right, still occupied by their telephonic service; the corresponding room to the left being for general use. The room at the top of the stairs —where Wright still presides and entrances the telegraph messengers with sententious remarks on political, social, and philosophic affairs—was also used for writing-out purposes, if a man could find a corner at the table at which to sit.

SMEETH.

This was difficult, since this closet, not bigger than a boot-room in an ordinary household, was also sole dining-room attached to the Press Gallery. In addition to his official duties at the door, Wright, in his private capacity, added those of purveyor. Every Monday he brought down (in two red cotton pocket-handkerchiefs, it was profanely said) a round of cold boiled beef and a chunk of boiled ham; the latter tending, if memory serves, rather towards the shank end. This, with bread, cheese, and bottled beer, was the sole provision for the sustenance of the sixty or seventy gentlemen who then composed the corps of the Press Gallery. At that time it was more widely the practice to go out to dinner or supper. But for those whose duties kept them in close attendance on the gallery there was nothing for it but

cold beef, cold ham, or an amalgamation carefully doled forth. Many a night, seated at the little table that still remains in this outer room, I have watched Wright prepare my sumptuous repast. He was even then short-sighted, and to this day I have vivid recollection of the concern with which I saw his nose approach to dangerous contiguity of the round of beef as he leaned over it to cut a slice with judicious thinness.

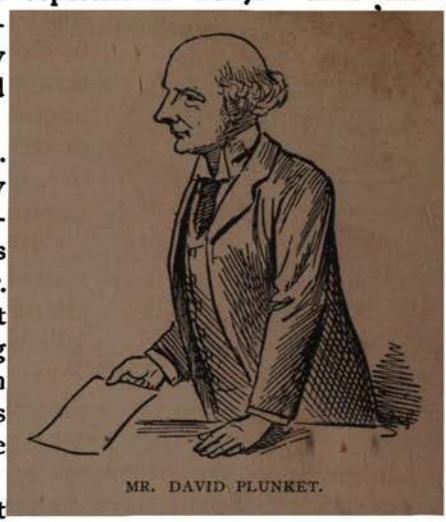
CUTTING THE BEEF.

Even this accommodation was regarded askance by the constitutional authorities of the House, still accustomed to regard the Press as an intruder happily subject, under the beneficent regulations of the Stuart days, to instant expulsion if any member pleased to take note of the presence of its representatives. In 1867, a Committee sat to consider the general arrangements of the House. The reporters, greatly daring, took the opportunity of laying before it a statement of their grievances, and asked for fuller convenience for carrying on their work. Lord Charles Russell, then Serjeant-at-Arms, was, very properly, astonished at their unreasonableness, and plaintively deplored the times when, as he put it, reporters seemed to require only the necessaries of life, not presuming to lift their eyes to its luxuries.

LORD CHARLES RUSSELL.

"They used, I am told," Lord Charles added, "to have just a glass of water and biscuits, or anything of that sort. Now they have their tea at the back of the gallery."

Oliver Twist asking for more scarcely reached the height of the audacity of these reporters in 1867. Like Mr. Bumble, the Serjeant-at-Arms of the day literally gasped in dismayed astonishment.



MR. DAVID PLUNKET.

All this is changed. Thanks to the courtesy and reasonableness of successive First Commissioners of Works, of whom Mr. David Plunket was not the least forward in doing good, the arrangements in connection with the Press Gallery of to-day leave nothing to be desired.

Of the changes that have taken place in the House itself, and of the ghosts that flit about the benches where twenty years ago they sat in flesh and bone, I shall have something to say.

CHAPTER II

FEBRUARY

LOOKING round the House of Commons now gathered for its second Session, one is struck by the havoc death and other circumstances have made with the assembly that filled the same chamber twenty years ago. Parliament, like the heathen goddess, devours its own children. But the rapidity with which the process is completed turns out on minute inquiry to be a little startling. Of the six hundred and seventy members who form the present House of Commons, how many does the Speaker suppose sat with him in the Session of 1873?

THE SPEAKER.

Mr. Peel himself was then in the very prime of life, had already been eight years member for Warwick, and by favour of his father's old friend, and once young disciple (Mr. Gladstone), held the office of Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade. Members, if they paid any attention to the unobtrusive personality seated at the remote end of the Treasury Bench, never thought the day would come when the member for Warwick would step into the Chair and rapidly establish a reputation as the best Speaker of modern times.

I have a recollection of seeing Mr. Peel stand at the table answering a question connected with his department. I noticed him only because he was the youngest son of the great Sir Robert Peel, and was a striking contrast to his brother Robert, a flamboyant personage who at that time filled considerable space below the gangway.

SIR ROBERT PEEL.

In addition to Mr. Peel there are in the present House of Commons exactly fifty-one members who sat in Parliament in the Session of 1873—fifty-two out of six hundred and fifty-eight as the House of that day was numbered. Ticking them off in alphabetical order, the first of the Old Guard, still hale and enjoying the respect and esteem of members on both sides of the House, is Sir Walter Barttelot. As Colonel Barttelot he was known to the Parliament of 1873. But since then, to quote a phrase he has emphatically reiterated in the ears of many Parliaments, he has "gone one step farther," and become a baronet.

SIR W. BARTTELOT.

This tendency to forward movement seems to have been hereditary. Sir Walter's father, long honourably known as Smyth, going "one step farther" assumed the name of Barttelot. Colonel Barttelot did not loom large in the Parliament of 1868-74, though he was always ready to do sentry duty on nights when the House was in Committee on the Army Estimates. It was the Parliament of 1874-80, when the air was full of rumours of war, when Russia and Turkey clutched each other by the throat at Plevna, when the House

of Commons, meeting for ordinary business, was one night startled by news that the Russian Army was at the gates of Constantinople—it was then Colonel Barttelot's military experience (chiefly gained in discharge of his duties as Lieutenant-Colonel of the Second Battalion Sussex Rifle Volunteers) was lavishly placed at the disposal of the House and the country.

When Disraeli was going out of office he made the Colonel a baronet, a distinction the more honourable to both since Colonel Barttelot, though a loyal Conservative, was never a party hack.

Sir Michael Beach sat for East Gloucestershire in 1873, and had not climbed higher up the Ministerial ladder than the Under-Secretaryship of the Home Department. Another Beach, then as now in the House, was the member for North Hants. William Wither Bramston Beach is his full style. Mr. Beach has been in Parliament thirty-six years, having through that period uninterruptedly represented his native county, Hampshire. That is a distinction he shares with few members to-day, and to it is added the privilege of being personally the obscurest man in the Commons. I do not suppose there are a hundred men in the House to-day who at a full muster could point out the member for Andover. A close attendance upon Parliament through twenty years necessarily gives me a pretty intimate knowledge of members. I not only do not know Mr. Beach by sight, but never heard of his existence till, attracted by the study of relics of the Parliament elected in 1868, I went through the list.

MR. W. W. B. BEACH.

Another old member still with us is Mr. Michael Biddulph, a partner in that highly-respectable firm, Cocks, Biddulph, and Co. Twenty years ago Mr. Buddulph sat as member for his native county of Hereford, ranked as a Liberal and a reformer, voted for the Disestablishment

of the Irish Church and other measures forming part of Mr. Gladstone's policy. But political events with him, as with some others, have moved too rapidly, and now he, sitting as member for the Ross Division of the county, votes with the Conservatives.

MR. A. H. BROWN.

Mr. Jacob Bright is still left to us, representing a division of the city for which he was first elected in November 1867. Mr. A. H. Brown represents to-day a Shropshire borough, as he did twenty years ago. I do not think he looks a day older than when he sat for Wenlock in 1873. But though then only twenty-nine, as the almanack reckons, he was a middle-aged young man with whom it was always difficult to connect associations of a cornetcy in the 5th Dragoon Guards, a post of danger which family tradition persistently assigns to him.

Twenty years ago the House was still struggling with the necessity of recognising a Mr. Campbell-Bannerman.

MR. CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN.

In 1868, one Mr. Henry Campbell had been elected member for the Stirling Districts. Four years later, for reasons, it is understood, not unconnected with a legacy, he added the name of Bannerman to his patronymic. At that time, and till the dissolution, he sat on the Treasury Bench as Financial Secretary to the War Office.

Mr. Henry Chaplin is another member, happily still left to us, who has, over a long space of years, represented his native county. It was

as member for Mid-Lincolnshire he entered the House of Commons at the memorable General Election of 1868, the fate of the large majority of his colleagues impressing upon him at the epoch a deeply rooted dislike of Mr. Gladstone and all his works.

MR. HENRY CHAPLIN.

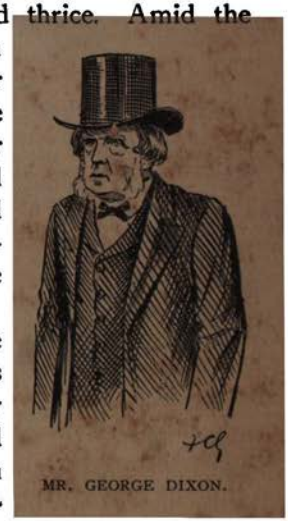
Mr. Jeremiah James Colman, still member for Norwich, has sat for that borough since February 1871, and has preserved, unto this last, the sturdy Liberalism imbued with which he embarked on political life. When he entered the House he made the solemn record that J. J. C. "does not consider the recent Reform Bill as the end at which we should rest." The Liberal Party has marched far since then, and the great Norwich manufacturer has always mustered in the van.

SIR CHARLES DILKE.

In the Session of 1873 Sir Charles Dilke had but lately crossed the threshold of manhood, bearing his days before him, and possibly viewing the brilliant career through which for a time he strongly strode. Just thirty, married a year, home from his trip round the world, with *Greater Britain* still running through successive editions, the young member for Chelsea had the ball at his feet. He had lately kicked it with audacious eccentricity. Two years earlier

he had made his speech in Committee of Supply on the Civil List.

What he said then is said now every Session, with sharper point, and even more uncompromising directness, by Mr. Labouchere, Mr. Storey, and others. It was new to the House of Commons twenty-two years ago, and when Mr. Auberon Herbert (to-day a sedate gentleman, who writes good Tory letters to the *Times*) seconded the motion in a speech of almost hysterical vehemence, there followed a scene that stands memorable even in the long series that succeeded it in the following Parliament. Mr. James Lowther was profoundly moved; whilst as for Mr. Cavendish Bentinck, his feelings of loyalty to the Throne were so overwrought that, as was recorded at the time, he went out behind the Speaker's Chair, and crowed thrice. Amid the uproar, some one, anticipating the action of Mr. Joseph Gillis Biggar on another historic occasion, "spied strangers." The galleries were cleared, and for an hour there raged throughout the House a wild scene. When the doors were opened and the public readmitted, the Committee was found placidly agreeing to the vote Sir Charles Dilke had challenged.



MR. GEORGE DIXON.

Mr. George Dixon is one of the members for Birmingham, as he was twenty years ago, but he wears his party rue with a difference. In 1873 he caused himself to be entered in "Dod" as "an advanced Liberal, opposed to the rate-paying clause of the Reform Act, and in favour of an amendment of those laws which tend to accumulate landed property." Now Mr. Dixon has joined "the gentlemen of England," whose tendency to accumulate landed property shocks him no more.

Sir William Dyke was plain Hart Dyke in '73; then, as now, one of the members for Kent, and not yet Whip of the Liberal Party, much less Minister of Education. Mr.

G. H. Finch also then, as now, was member for Rutland, running Mr. Beach close for the prize of modest obscurity.

SIR W. HART DYKE.

In the Session of 1873 Mr. Gladstone was Prime Minister, sixty-four years of age, and wearied to death. I well remember him seated on the Treasury Bench in those days, with eager face and restless body. Sometimes, as morning broke on the long, turbulent sitting, he let his head fall back on the bench, closing his eyes and seeming to sleep, the worn face the while taking on ten years of added age. In the last two Sessions of the Salisbury Parliament he often looked younger than he did eighteen or nineteen years earlier. Then, as has happened to him since, his enemies were those of his own household. This Session —of 1873—saw the birth of the Irish University Bill, which broke the power of the strongest Ministry that had ruled in England since the Reform Bill.

MR. GLADSTONE.

Mr. Gladstone introduced the Bill himself, and though it was singularly intricate, he within the space of three hours not only made it clear from preamble to schedule, but had talked over a predeterminedly hostile House into believing it would do well to accept it. Mr. Horsman, not an emotional person, went home after listening to the speech and wrote a glowing letter to the *Times*, in which he hailed Mr. Gladstone and the Irish University Bill as the most notable of the recent dispensations

of a beneficent Providence. Later, when the Tea-room teemed with cabal, and revolt rapidly spread through the Liberal host, presaging the defeat of the Government, Mr. Horsman, in his most solemn manner, explained away this letter to a crowded and hilarious House. The only difference between him and seven-eighths of Mr. Gladstone's audience was that he had committed the indiscretion of putting pen to paper whilst he was yet under the spell of the orator, the others going home to bed to think it over.

The Bill was thrown out by a majority of three. Mr. Disraeli wisely declining to take office, Mr. Gladstone remained on the Treasury Bench. But his power was shattered, and he and the Liberal party went out into the wilderness to tarry there for six long years.

To this catastrophe gentlemen at that time respectively known as Mr. Vernon Harcourt and Mr. Henry James appreciably contributed. They worried Mr. Gladstone into dividing between them the law offices of the Crown. But this turn of affairs came too late to be of advantage to the nation. The only reminders of that episode in their political career are the title of knighthood and a six months' salary earned in the recess preceding the General Election of 1874.

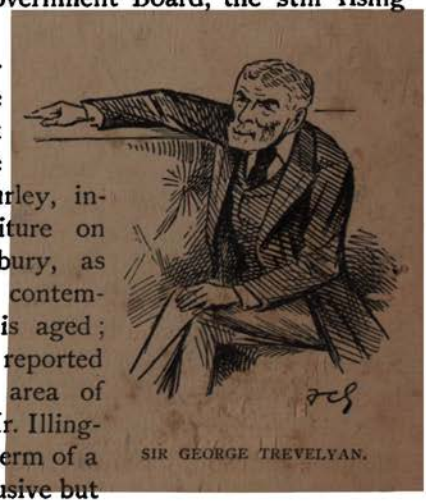
Mr. Disraeli's keen sight recognised the game being played on the Front Bench below the gangway, where the two then inseparable friends sat shoulder to shoulder. "I do not know," he slyly said, one night when the Ministerial crisis was impending, "whether the House is yet to regard the observations of the hon. member for Oxford (Vernon Harcourt) as carrying the authority of a Solicitor-General?"

Of members holding official or ex-official positions gathered in the House of Commons this month, and who were in Parliament in 1873, are Mr. Goschen, then First Lord of the Admiralty, and Liberal member for the City of London; Lord George Hamilton, member for Middlesex, and not yet a Minister; Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, member for Reading, and Secretary to the Admiralty; Mr. J. Lowther, not yet advanced beyond the Secretaryship of the Poor

Law Board, and that held only for a few months pending the Tory rout in 1868; Mr. Henry Matthews, then sitting as Liberal member for Dungarvan, proud of having voted for the Disestablishment of the Irish Church in 1869; Mr. Osborne Morgan, not yet on the Treasury Bench; Mr. Mundella, inseparable from Sheffield, then sitting below the gangway, serving a useful apprenticeship for the high office to which he has since been called; George Otto Trevelyan, now Sir George, then his highest title to fame being the *Competition Wallah;* Mr. David Plunket, member for Dublin University, a private member seated on a back bench; Sir Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth, just married, interested in the "First Principles of Modern Chemistry"; and Mr. Stansfeld, President of the Local Government Board, the still rising hope of the Radical party.

"MEMBER FOR DUNGARVAN."

Members of the Parliament of 1868 in the House to-day, seated on back benches above or below the gangway, are Colonel Gourley, inconsolable at the expenditure on Royal yachts; Mr. Hanbury, as youthful-looking as his contemporary, ex-Cornet Brown, is aged; Mr. Staveley Hill, who is reported to possess an appreciable area of the American Continent; Mr. Illingworth, who approaches the term of a quarter of a century's unobtrusive but useful Parliamentary service; Mr. Johnston, still of Ballykilbeg, but no longer a Liberal, as he ranked twenty years ago; Sir John



SIR GEORGE TREVELYAN.

Kennaway, towering over his leaders from a back bench above the gangway; Sir Wilfrid Lawson, increasingly wise, and not less gay than of yore; Mr. Lea, who has gone over to the enemy he faced in 1873; Sir John Lubbock, who, though no sluggard, still from time to time goes to the ants; Mr. Peter M'Lagan, who has succeeded Sir Charles Forster as Chairman of the Committee on Petitions; Sir John Mowbray, still, as in 1873, "in favour of sober, rational, safe, and temperate progress," and meanwhile voting against all Liberal measures; Sir Richard Paget, model of the old-fashioned Parliament man; Sir John Pender, who, after long exile, has returned to the Wick Burghs; Mr. T. B. Potter, still member for Rochdale, as he has been these twenty-seven years; Mr. F. S. Powell, now Sir Francis; Mr. William Rathbone, as in times of yore, "a decided Liberal"; Sir Matthew White Ridley, not yet Speaker; Sir Bernard Samuelson, back again to Banbury Cross; Mr. J. C. Stevenson, all these years member for South Shields; Mr. C. P. Villiers, grown out of Liberalism into the Fatherhood of the House; Mr. Hussey Vivian, now Sir Hussey; Mr. Whitbread,

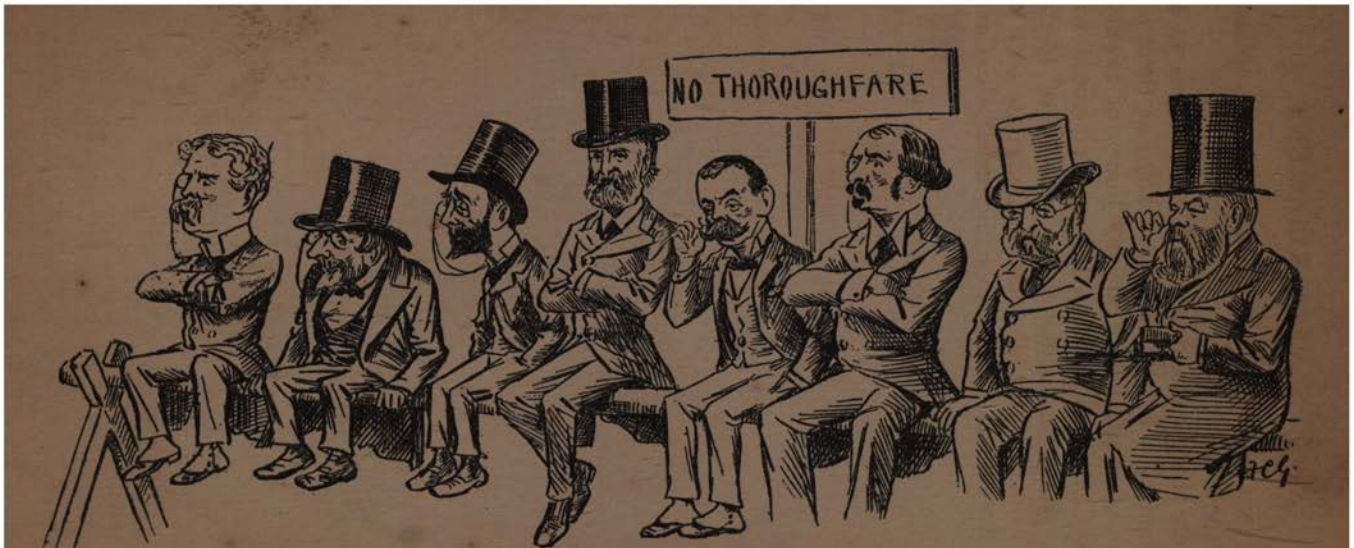
SIR W. LAWSON.

SIR J. MOWBRAY.

COLONEL SAUNDERSON.

supremely sententious, courageously commonplace; and Colonel Saunderson.

But here there seems a mistake. There was an Edward James Saunderson in the Session of 1873 as there is one in the Session of 1893. But Edward James of twenty years ago sat for Cavan, ranked as a Liberal, and voted with Mr. Gladstone, which the Colonel Saunderson of to-day certainly does not. Yet, oddly enough, both date their election addresses from Castle Saunderson, Belturbet, Co. Cavan.



"OBSTRUCTION."

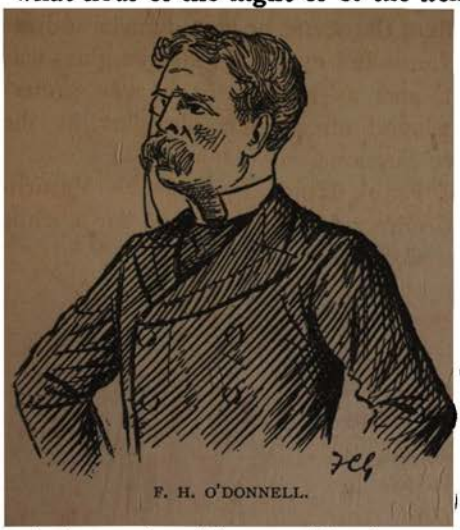
CHAPTER III

MARCH

IT is thirteen years since a new Parliament last blithely started on its way with Mr. Gladstone sitting in the seat of the Premier. Since March 1880 a great deal has happened, not least in the change of circumstances under which the business of the House of Commons is conducted. The majority of the House of Commons may be Liberal or Conservative, according to a passing flood of conviction on the part of the constituencies. When presumptuous hands are stretched forth to touch the Ark of its procedure, its instincts are all Tory. For more than two hundred years preceding the advent of a Tory Ministry in 1886, this was so. Mr. Gladstone, driven to desperation in the second Session of the Parliament of 1880-85, endeavoured to reform procedure so that obstruction might be fought on even terms. He was met by such resolute and persistent opposition from the Conservative side that, even with an overwhelming majority at his back, he succeeded only in tinkering the pot. Oddly enough, it was left for the Conservatives when they came into office to revolutionise the system upon which, through the ages, Parliamentary business had been carried on.

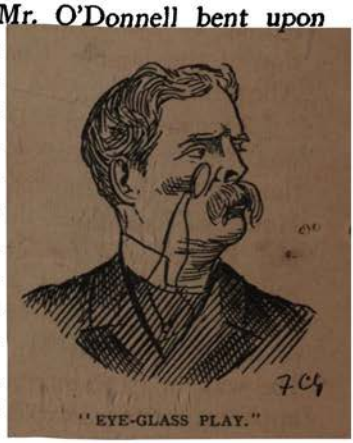
There was nothing in the reforms more startling to the old Parliamentarian than the proposal automatically to close debate at midnight. A dozen years ago members of the House of Commons assembled at four o'clock for prayers.

Questions began at half-past four, and no one could say at what hour of the night or of the next morning the cry "Who goes home?" might echo through the lobby. In those days Mr. O'Donnell was master of the situation, and he had many imitators. A debate carried on through several nights might seem to be approaching a conclusion. The Leader of the Opposition, rising between eleven o'clock and midnight, spoke in a crowded House. The Premier, or his lieutenant, followed, assuming to wind up the debate. Members wearied of the long sitting were prepared to go forth to the division lobby; when from below the gangway on the left there uprose a familiar figure, and there was heard a well-known voice.



F. H. O'DONNELL.

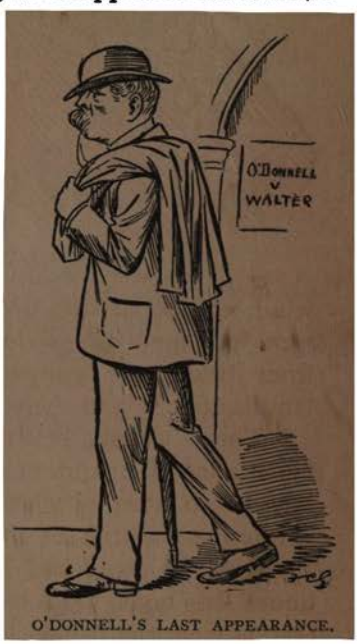
These usually belonged to Mr. O'Donnell bent upon vindicating the right of a private member to interpose when the constituted authorities of the House agreed that debate had been continued long enough. A roar of execration from the fagged legislators greeted the intruder. He expected this, and was in no degree perturbed. In earliest practice he had a way of dropping his eyeglass as if startled by the uproar, searching for it with puzzled, preoccupied expression, apparently debating with himself what this outburst might portend. He did not love the British House of Commons, and



"EYE-GLASS PLAY."

delighted in thwarting its purposes. But he knew what was due to it in the way of respect, and, however angry passions might rise, however turbulent the scene, he would never address it looking upon it with the naked eye. As his eye-glass was constantly tumbling out, and as search for it was preternaturally deliberate, it played an appreciable part in the prolongation of successive Sessions.

What has become of Frank Hugh, I wonder? Vanishing from the House of Commons, he reappeared for a while on the scene out of doors, characteristically acting the part of the petrel that heralded the storm Mr. Pigott ineffectively tried to ride. It must be a consolation to Mr. O'Donnell, in his retirement, wherever it is passed, to reflect on the fact that it was he who directly brought about the appointment of the Parnell Commission, with all it effected. His action for libel brought against the *Times* preluded and inevitably led up to the formal investigation of the famous Charges and Allegations.



O'DONNELL'S LAST APPEARANCE.

The member for Dungarvan was, in his day, the most thoroughly disliked man in the House of Commons, distaste for Mr. Parnell and for Mr. Biggar in his early prime being softened by contrast with his subtler provocation. An exceedingly clever debater, he was a phrase-maker, some of whose epigrams Mr. Disraeli would not have disowned. He was a Parliamentary type of ancient standing, and apparently ineradicable growth. In the present House of Commons fresh developments are presented by Mr. Seymour Keay and Mr. Morton. These are distinct varieties, but from the unmistakable root. Both are gifted with boundless

volubility, unhampered by ordinary considerations of coherency and cogency. Neither is influenced by that sense of the dread majesty of the House of Commons which keeps some members dumb all through their Parliamentary life, and to the last, as in the case of Mr. Bright, weighs upon even great orators. The difference between the older and the new development is that whilst over Mr. O'Donnell's intentional and deliberate vacuity of speech there gleamed frequent flashes of wit, Mr. Morton and Mr. Keay are only occasionally funny, and then the effect is undesigned.

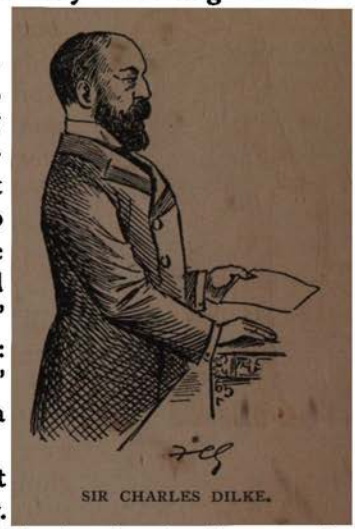
MR. SEYMOUR KEAY.

Since we have these two gentlemen still with us, it would be rash to say that if Mr. O'Donnell could revisit the glimpses of Big Ben he would find his occupation gone. He would certainly discover that his opportunities had been limited, and would have to recommence practice under greatly altered conditions. One of the more famous achievements took place in the infancy of the Parliament of 1880-85, and, apart from its dramatic interest, is valuable as illustrating the change effected in Parliamentary procedure by the New Rules. On that particular June night the paper was loaded with questions in a fashion unfamiliar in the last Parliament, though there are not lacking signs of renewed activity since political parties

MR. A. C. MORTON.

changed places. Question No. 23 stood in the name of Mr. O'Donnell, and contained in his best literary style a serious indictment of M. Challemel-Lacour, just nominated by the French Government as their representative at the Court of St. James.

Sir Charles Dilke, then Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, made categorical reply, directly traversing all the points in the indictment. When he resumed his seat Mr. O'Donnell rose in his usual deliberate manner, captured his eye-glass, and having fixed it to his satisfaction, remarked in his drawling voice that it was "perfectly impossible to accept the explanation of the Government." Being interrupted with cries of "Order! Order!" he quietly played his trump card: "If I am not allowed to explain," he said, "I will conclude with a motion."



SIR CHARLES DILKE.

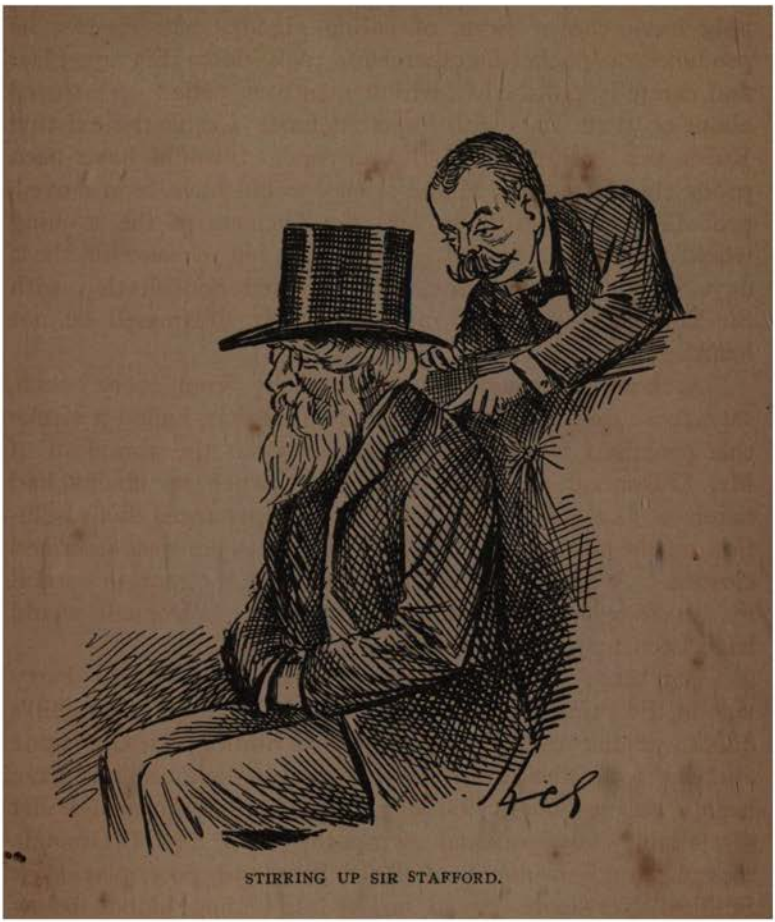
The House howled again, but it was a cry of despair. Mr. O'Donnell, they knew, had the whip hand. In those good old days he, or any other member desiring to obstruct ordinary procedure, might, in the middle of questions, start a debate on any subject under the sun. This and other outrages were doubtless recalled by the House of Commons when revising its Rules. It then ordered that no member might, during the progress of questions, interpose with a motion on which to found debate. If, in this current month of March, Mr. O'Donnell, being a member of the House of Commons, wanted to attack M. Challemel-Lacour, he must needs have waited till the last question on the paper was disposed of, and could then have moved the adjournment only if his description of the question—as one of urgent public importance—were approved by the Speaker, and if, thereafter, forty members rose to support the request for a hearing.

In June 1880 all that was left for the crowded House to do was to roar with resentment. Mr. O'Donnell was used to this incentive, and had it been withheld would probably have shown signs of failing vigour. As it was, he produced a pocket-handkerchief, took down his eye-glass and carefully polished it, whilst members yelled and tossed about on their seats with impotent fury. Under the existing Rules this scene, if it had ever opened, would have been promptly blotted out. The closure would have been moved, probably a division taken, and the business of the evening would have gone forward. There was no closure in those days, and Mr. Gladstone, after hurried consultation with Sir Erskine May, hastily moved that Mr. O'Donnell be not heard.

A shout of savage exultation rising from every bench, save those on which the Irish members sat, hailed a stroke that promised to deliver the House from the thraldom of Mr. O'Donnell at the very moment when its chains had taken a final twist. In ordinary circumstances this resolution would have played the part of the as yet unconsecrated closure. A division would have followed, the motion carried by an overwhelming majority, and Mr. O'Donnell would have been temporarily shut up.

But those were not ordinary times. The Fourth Party was in the prime of its vigour. Lord Randolph Churchill's quick eye discovered an opening for irritating Mr. Gladstone and damaging the Government by making what should have been a business night one long turmoil. Mr. Parnell, whilst disclaiming any personal sympathy with Mr. O'Donnell, moved the adjournment of the debate, and poor, placid Sir Stafford Northcote, egged on by the young bloods below the gangway, raised various points of order. Finally, at eight o'clock, the House dividing on Mr. Parnell's amendment, Sir Stafford Northcote voted with the Irish members, leading a hundred men of the Party of Law and Order into the same lobby.

Hour after hour the riot continued. At one time blameless Sir William Harcourt, then Home Secretary,



STIRRING UP SIR STAFFORD.

appearing at the table, a Conservative member, amid tumultuous shouts, moved that he be not heard. When members grew tired of shouting at each other they divided on fresh motions for the adjournment, and it was not till one o'clock on the following morning that Mr. O'Donnell, grateful for a pleasant evening, was good enough to undertake that before he recurred to the question he would give due notice, so that the Speaker might exercise his discretion in revising its terms. At five minutes past one in the morning, after a wrangle full eight hours long, the Speaker, with a pretty assumption of nothing particular having happened, called on the next question on the paper, which was No. 24.

"DISGUST."

All this might happen again on any night of this month save for the beneficent action of the New Rules a long-suffering Parliament was finally induced to adopt. On the threshold of a new Parliament it is useful to recall the scene as an assistance in calculating what may be accomplished by the Parliament elected in 1892, as compared with that which began its history in 1880. On the face of it, Parliament to-day has much less time at its disposal for the accomplishment of work than it had a dozen years ago. Then, the duration of a sitting was indefinite. The House might, as it did in February 1881, meet at four o'clock on a Monday afternoon and sit continuously till Wednesday morning. Now, the Speaker takes the Chair at three o'clock; public business commences at half-past three; and at midnight, save in cases where the Standing Order has been formally suspended, the Speaker leaves the Chair, and the House adjourns, whoever may be on his feet.

The influence of this automatic procedure is beneficially

felt throughout the whole of debate. One wholesome influence works in the direction of using up the early hours of the sitting, an arrangement which carries comfort to countless printing offices and editorial sanctums. Some time before the New Rules came into operation, Mr. Gladstone discovered for himself the convenience and desirability of taking part in debate at the earliest possible hour of a sitting. His earlier associations drifted round a directly opposite course. In the good old days the champions of debate did not interpose till close upon midnight, when they had the advantage of audiences sustained and exhilarated by dinner. That was before the era of special wires to the provincial papers, early morning trains, and vastly increased circulation for the London journals. Mr. Gladstone discovered that he was more carefully reported and his observations more deliberately discussed if he spoke between five and seven o'clock in the evening than if, following earlier habit, he addressed the House between eleven and one in the morning. He has, accordingly, for some years been accustomed, when he has an important speech to deliver, to interpose in debate immediately after questions.

This habit has become general, even compulsory, with members who may, within certain limits, choose their own time for speaking. All the cream of debate is now skimmed before the dinner-hour. At the close of a pitched battle the two Leaders of Party, as heretofore, wind up the debate. But their opportunity for orating is severely circumscribed. The audience in the House of Commons does not begin to reassemble after dinner till half-past ten. Rising at that hour, the Leader of the Opposition, if he fairly divides the available time with the right honourable gentleman opposite, must not speak more than three-quarters of an hour, and should not exceed forty minutes.

This is a necessity desirable not less in the orator's interest than in that of the audience. Except for the exposition of an intricate measure, twenty minutes is ample time for any man to say what is useful for his fellow-men to hear. All Mr. Disraeli's best speeches were made within

half an hour, and if he thought it necessary, from a sense of the importance of his position, to prolong them, his stock of good things was exhausted in twenty minutes, the rest being what Carlyle disrespectfully described as thrice-boiled cole-wort. Mr. Gladstone can go on indefinitely, and in very recent times has been known to hold his audience spell-bound for three hours. But even he has profited by the beneficent tyranny that now rules the limit of debate, and, rising with the knowledge that he has but forty minutes to speak in, has excelled himself. For less exuberant speakers not gifted with his genius, the new discipline is even more marked in its benefits.

It is too soon to endeavour to estimate the general characteristics of the *personnel* of the new Parliament. It will probably turn out to be very much of the same class as the innumerable army of its predecessors. When Mr. Keir Hardie came down on the opening day in a wagonette, with flags flying and accordions playing, it was cried aloud in some quarters that the end was at hand. This apprehension was strengthened when Mr. Hardie strolled about the House with a tweed travelling-cap on his head, the Speaker at the time being in the Chair. This, as Dr. Johnson explained, when the lady asked him why he had described the horse's pastern as its knee, was "ignorance, pure ignorance." Mr. Hardie is not a man of the quietest manners, as was testified to by the apparition in Palace Yard of the wagonette and its musical party; but in the much-talked-of incident of the cap he sinned inadvertently. Before the Speaker took the Chair he had seen members walking about with their hats on. He had observed that even in his presence they remained seated with their heads covered. The shade

MR. KEIR HARDIE.

of etiquette which approves this fashion whilst it sternly prohibits a member from keeping his hat on when in motion, even to the extent of leaning over to speak to a friend on the bench below him, was too fine to catch the eye of a new member.

Mr. Keir Hardie has done much worse things than this in his public appearances during the recess, and since the Session opened there has not been lacking evidence of resolve to keep himself in the front of the stage where the gallery may see him. But this is no new thing, to be cited in proof of the deterioration of the composition and style of the House of Commons. It has been done repeatedly in various fashions within recent memory, and always with the same result. No man, not even Mr. Biggar—and he may be cited as the most ruthless experimenter — has successfully struggled against the subtle disciplinary influence of the House of Commons.

THE LATE MR. BIGGAR.

From the first the member for Cavan set himself in deliberate fashion to outrage Parliamentary traditions and usages. He finished by becoming a punctilious practitioner of Parliamentary forms, a stickler for the minutest observation of order. Whilst Mr. Gladstone and other members of old standing were content to preface their speeches with the monosyllable "Sir," nothing less than "Mr. Speaker, sir," would satisfy Mr. Biggar. No one who has not heard the inflection of tone with which this was uttered, nor seen the oratorical sweep of the hand that launched it on its course, can realise how much of combined deference and authority the phrase is capable of. Mr. Biggar, having in his early Parliamentary days defied the Chair and affronted the sensibilities of the House, alike in the matter of dress and deportment, developed into a portly gentleman of almost smug appearance, a terror to new members. Woe to any

who in his ignorance passed between the Chair and the member addressing it; who walked in from a division with his hat on; or who stood an inch or two within the Bar whilst debate was going forward. Mr. Biggar's strident cry of "Order! Order!" reverberated through the House. Others joined in the shout, and the abashed offender hastily withdrew into obscurity.

It is the same with others of less strongly marked character. Vanity or garrulity may force a new member into a position of notoriety. He may, according to his measure of determination, try a fall again and again with the House, and may sometimes, as in the case of Mr. O'Donnell, seem to win. But in the end the House of Commons proves victorious. It is a sort of whetstone on which blades of various temperament operate. In time, they either forgo the practice or wear themselves away. In either case the whetstone remains.

This is a rule without exception, and is a reassuring reflection in view of the talk about the degeneracy of the House of Commons, and the decadence of its standard of manner. It would not be difficult to show that the House at present in Session will, from the point of view of manners, favourably compare with any that have gone before—though, to be just, the comparison should be sought with Parliaments elected under similar conditions, with the Liberals in office and the Conservatives in opposition. That is an arrangement always found to be more conducive to lively proceedings than when parties are disposed in the contrary order. The Parliament dissolved last year was decorously dull. Mr. Gladstone in opposition is not prone to show sport, and no encouragement was held out to enterprising groups below the gangway to bait the Government. It was very different in the Parliament of 1880-85.

There are already signs that the new Parliament will not lie under the charge of deplorable dulness brought against its predecessor. But these varying moods are due to waves of political passion, and do not affect the question whether the House of Commons as a body of English gentlemen

met for the discharge of public business has or has not deteriorated. I have an engraving of a picture of the House of Commons in Protection days. It was carefully drawn in the Session of 1842. A more respectable body of the gentlemen of England it would be difficult to gather together. With the possible exception of one or two political adventurers like the then member for Shrewsbury, there is probably not a man in the House who is not well born or at least rich. Mr. Keir Hardie would look strange indeed in these serried ranks of portly gentlemen with high coat collars, cravats up to their chin, short-bodied coats showing the waistcoat beneath, and tightly-trousered legs. Yet this House, and its equally prim successors, had its obstruction, its personal wrangles, and its occasional duel. Peel was attacked by Disraeli in a fashion and in language that would not be tolerated in the House of Commons now, even though the target were Mr. Gladstone.

CHAPTER IV

APRIL

THE death of Sir Walter Barttelot removes one of a type rapidly disappearing from the Parliamentary stage. He entered the House thirty-three years ago, when Lord Palmerston was Premier, Mr. Gladstone was Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir George Cornewall Lewis was at the Home Office, and Lord John Russell looked after Foreign Affairs.

A Vanishing Type.

The House of Commons was a different place in those days, the heritage of the classes, a closed door against any son of the masses. Sir Walter was born a country gentleman, his natural prejudices not being smoothed down by a term of service in the Dragoon Guards. He was not a brilliant man, nor, beyond the level attainments of a county magistrate, an able one. But he was thoroughly honest; suspected himself of ingrained prejudice, and always fought against it. He suffered and learnt much during his long Parliamentary life.

One of the earliest shocks dealt him was the appearance in the House of Mr. Chamberlain, newly elected for Birmingham. It is difficult at this time of day to realise the attitude in which the gentlemen of England sixteen years ago stood towards the statesman who is now proudly numbered in their ranks. When he presented himself to be sworn in, it was one of the jokes of the day that Sir Walter Barttelot expected he would approach the table making "a cart-

wheel" down the floor, as ragged little boys disport themselves along the pavement when a drag or omnibus passes.

"ANTICIPATION."

Sir Walter was genuinely surprised to find in the fearsome Birmingham Radical a quietly-dressed, well-mannered, almost boyish-looking man, who spoke in a clear, admirably pitched voice, and opposed the Prisons Bill, then under discussion, on the very lines from which Sir Walter had himself attacked it when it was brought in during the previous Session.

It was characteristic of this fine old English gentleman that, having done a man an injustice by unconsciously forming a wrong opinion about him, he hastened forthwith to make amends.

"REALITY."

"If," he said, when Mr. Chamberlain had resumed his seat, "the hon. member for Birmingham will always address the House with the same quietness, and with the same intelligence displayed on this occasion, I can assure him the House of Commons will always be ready to listen to him."

This is delicious, looking back over the years, watching Mr. Chamberlain's soaring flight, and thinking of the good county member thus loftily patronising him. But it was a bold thing to be said at that time of Mr. Chamberlain by Sir Walter Barttelot, and some friends who sat near him thought his charity had led him a little too far.

The Sussex squire was of a fine nature—simple, ever ready to be moved by generous impulses. There were two men coming across the orbit of his Parliamentary life whose conduct he detested, and whose influence he feared. One was Mr. Parnell, the other Mr. Bradlaugh. Yet when the Commission acquitted Mr. Parnell of the charges brought against him by the forged letters, Sir Walter Barttelot sought him out in the Lobby, publicly shook hands with him, and congratulated him upon the result of the inquiry. When Mr. Bradlaugh lay on his death-bed, on the very night the House of Commons was debating the resolution to expunge from the Order Book the dictum that stood there through eleven years, declaring him ineligible either to take the oath or to make affirmation, Sir Walter Barttelot appealed to the House unanimously to pass the motion, concluding his remarks with emphatic expression of the hope that "God would spare Mr. Bradlaugh's life."

"SHADOWS."

Sir Walter never recovered from the blow dealt by the death of his son in Africa, aggravated as the sorrow was by the controversy which followed. Of late years he spoke very little; but in the Parliaments of 1874-80 and 1880-85 he was a frequent participator in debate. He was no orator, nor did he contribute original ideas to current discussion. Moreover, what he had to say was so tortured by the style of delivery that it lost something of whatever force naturally belonged to it.

I have a verbatim note taken fifteen years ago of a speech delivered in the House of Commons by Sir Walter, which faintly echoes an oratorical style whose master is no longer with us. It lacks the inconsequential emphasis, the

terrific vigour of the gesture, and the impression conveyed by the speaker's intense earnestness, that really, by and by, he would say something, which compelled the attention of new members and strangers in the gallery. But if the reader imagines portentous pauses represented by the short lines, and the deepening to tragic tones of the words marked in italics, he may in some measure realise the effect.

The speech from which this passage was taken was delivered in debate upon a resolution moved by Mr. Forster on the Cattle Plague Orders. Whenever in the passage Mr. Forster is personally alluded to it is necessary, in order to full realisation of the scene, to picture Sir Walter shaking a minatory forefinger, sideways, at the right hon. gentleman, not looking at him, but pointing him out to the scorn of mankind and the reprobation of country gentlemen: "Yet *he knows* [here the finger wags]—and—*knows full well*—in the—position he occupies—making a proposal of this kind—must be one—which—must be—fatal—to—the Bill. *No one knows better* than the right hon. gentleman—that when—he—raises a great question *of this kind*—upon a Bill *of this sort—namely* upon the second reading—of—this Bill—that that proposal—that he makes—is absolutely against the principle—of—the Bill. Now, I—de—ny that the principle—of—this Bill—is confined—and *is to be found* —in the 5th Schedule—of—the Bill."

A few minutes later an illustration occurred to the inspired orator, and was thus brought under the notice of the entranced House:—

"Now, Denmark—it is a *remark*—able country, is *Den*—mark—for—we have little—or no—dis—ease from *Den*—mark. The importation—from *Den*—mark—is something like fifty-six—thousand—cattle—*and the* curious part of it is this, that *nine*teen—thousand—of these—were—cows —and *these cows* came—to—this country—and—had been allowed to go—*all over*—this country—and—I have never yet heard—that these cows—that—have so—gone over *this country*—have spread any disease—in this country."

This was a mannerism which amused the House at the time, but did nothing to obscure the genuine qualities of Sir Walter, or lessen the esteem in which he was held. It cannot be said that the House of Commons was habitually moved by his argument in debate. But he was held in its warmest esteem, and his memory will long be cherished as linked with the highest type of English country gentlemen.

The Payment of Members.

At this time of writing there is talk in the House about payment of members. A private member has placed on the paper a resolution affirming the desirability of adopting the principle, and it is even said—which I take leave to doubt—that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has a card up his sleeve intended to win the game. It would be rash to predict stubborn resistance on the part of a body that has so often proved itself open to conviction as has the House of Commons. But I should say that to secure this end it would need a tussle quite as prolonged and as violent as has raged round Home Rule. Lowering and widening the suffrage has done much to alter the personal standard of the House of Commons. Nothing achieved through these sixty years would in its modifying effect equal the potency of the change wrought by paying members.

"A PERSONAL STANDARD."

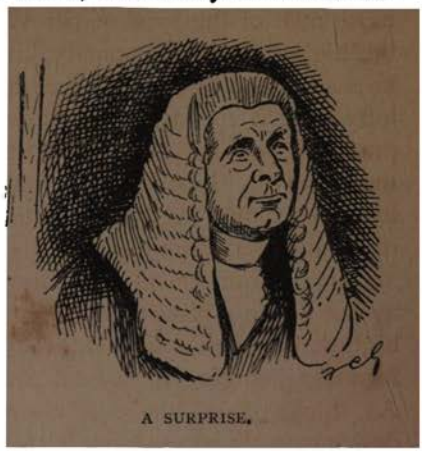
One illustration is found in the assertion, made with confidence, that under such a system the House would know no more men of the type of Sir Walter Barttelot. He was not the highest form of capacity, knowledge, or intelligence. But he was of the kind that gives to the House of Commons the lofty tone it speedily regains even after a paroxysm of post-prandial passion. The House of Commons is unique in many ways. I believe the main foundation of the position it holds among the Parliaments of the world is this condition of volunteered unremunerated service.

In spite of sneers from disappointed or flippant persons, a seat in the House of Commons still remains one of the highest prizes of citizen life. When membership becomes a business, bringing in say £6 a week, the charm will be gone. As things stand, there is no reason why any constituency desiring to do so may not return a member on the terms of paying him a salary. It is done in several cases, in two at least with the happiest results. It would be a different thing to throw the whole place open with standing advertisement for eligible members at a salary of £300 a year, paid quarterly. The horde of impecunious babblers and busybodies attracted by such a bait would trample down the class of men who compose the present House of Commons, and who are, in various ways, at touch with all the multiform interests of the nation.

Hats and Seats.

The great hat question which agitated the House of Commons at the commencement of the new Session, even placing Home Rule in a secondary position, has subsided, and will probably not again be heard of during the existence of the present Parliament. Whilst yet to the fore it was discussed with vigour and freshness; but it is no new thing. With the opening Session of every Parliament the activity and curiosity of new members lead to inconvenient crowding of a chamber that was not constructed to seat 670 members. In the early days of the 1880 Parliament the hat threatened to bring about a crisis. One evening Mr. Mitchell Henry startled the House by

addressing the Speaker from a side gallery. This of itself was regarded as a breach of order, and many members expected the Speaker would peremptorily interfere. But Mr. Mitchell Henry, an old Parliamentary hand, knew he was within his right in speaking from this unwonted position. The side galleries as far down as the Bar are as much within the House as is the Treasury Bench, and though orators frequenting them would naturally find a difficulty in catching the Speaker's eye, there is no other reason why they should not permanently occupy seats there.



A SURPRISE.

Mr. Mitchell Henry explained that he spoke from this place because he could not find any other. He had come down in ordinarily good time to take his seat, and found all the benches on the floor appropriated by having hats planted out along them. In each hat was fixed a card, indicating the name of the owner. What first puzzled Mr. Henry, and upon reflection led him to the detection of systematic fraud, was meeting in remote parts of the House, even in the street, members who went about wearing a hat, although what purported to be their headgear was being used to stake out a claim in the Legislative Chamber. Mr. Henry made the suggestion that only what he called "the working hat" should be recognised as an agent in securing a seat.

The strict morality of this arrangement was acquiesced in, and its adoption generally approved. But nothing practical came of it. By and by, in the ordinary evolution of things, the pressure of competition for seats died off, and the supernumerary hat disappeared from the scene. This Session the ancient trouble returned with increased force, owing to the peculiar circumstances in which political parties are

subdivided. The Irish members insisting upon retaining their old seats below the gangway to the left of the Speaker, there was no room for the Dissentient Liberals to range themselves in their proper quarters on the Opposition side. They, accordingly, moved over with the Liberals, and appropriated two benches below the gangway, thus driving a wedge of hostile force into the very centre of the Ministerial ranks. It was the Radical quarter that was thus invaded, and its occupants were not disposed tamely to submit to the incursion. The position was to be held only by strategy. Hence the appearance on the scene on the first day of the Session of Mr. Austen Chamberlain with relays of hats, which he set out along the coveted benches, and so secured them for the sitting. On the other side of the House a similar contest was going forward between the Irish Nationalist members, represented by Dr. Tanner, and their Ulster brethren, who acknowledge a leader in Colonel Saunderson.

THE NON-WORKING HAT—UNIONIST.

These tactics are made possible by the peculiar, indeed unique, arrangement by which seats are secured in the House of Commons. In all other Legislative Assemblies in the world each member has assigned to him a seat and desk, reserved for him as long as he is a member. That would be an impossible arrangement in the House of Commons, for the sufficient reason that while there are 670 duly returned members, there is not sitting room for much more than half the number. When a member desires to secure a particular seat for a given night he must be in his place at prayer-time, which on four days a week is at three o'clock in the

afternoon. On the fifth day, Wednesday, prayers are due at noon. At prayer-time, and only then, are obtainable tickets upon which a member may write his name, and, sticking the pasteboard in the brass frame at the back of the seat, is happy for the night.

Where what Mr. Mitchell Henry called the non-working hat comes in is in the practice of members gathering before prayer-time and placing their hats on the seat they desire

THE NON-WORKING HAT—IRISH.

to retain. That is a preliminary that receives no official recognition. "No prayer, no seat" is the axiom, and unless a member be actually present in the body when the Chaplain reads prayers, he is not held to have established a claim. Thus his spiritual welfare is subtly and indispensably linked with his material comfort.

There is nothing new under the glass roof of the House of Commons, not even the balloting syndicates, of which so much has been heard since the Session opened. Fifteen or

sixteen years ago the Irish members astonished everybody by the extraordinary luck that attended them at the ballot. The ballot in this sense has nothing to do with the electoral poll, being the process by which precedence for private members is secured. When a private member has in charge a Bill or resolution, much depends on the opportunity he secures for bringing it forward. Theoretically, Tuesday, Wednesday, and (in vanishing degree) a portion of Friday are appropriated to his use. On Tuesday he may bring on motions; on Wednesday advance Bills; and on Friday raise miscellaneous questions on certain stages of Supply. On days when notices of motion may be given there is set forth on the table a book with numbered lines, on which members write their names. Say there are fifty names written down—or four hundred, as was the melancholy case on the opening night of the Session—the Clerk at the table places in a box a corresponding number of slips of paper. When all is ready for the ballot, the Speaker having before him the list of names as written down, the Clerk at the table plunges his hand into the lucky-box, and taking out, at random, one of the pieces of paper, calls aloud the number marked upon it.

A New Thing in Syndicates.

BALLOT.

Say it is 365. The Speaker, referring to the list he holds in his hand, finds that Mr. Smith has written his name on line 365. He thereupon calls upon Mr. Smith, who has the first chance, and selects what in his opinion is the most

favourable day, *ceteris paribus*, the earliest at liberty. So the process goes through till the last paper in the ballot-box has been taken out and the list is closed.

It is at best a wearisome business, a criminal waste of time, useless for practical purposes. It was well enough when Parliament was not overburdened with work, and when the members balloting for places rarely exceeded a score. But when, as happened on the opening day of the Session, two of the freshest hours of the sitting are occupied by the performance, it is felt that a change is desirable. This could easily be effected, there being no reason in the world why the process of balloting for places on the Order Book should not be carried out as was the balloting for places in the Strangers' Galleries on the night Mr. Gladstone introduced his Home Rule Bill. On that occasion the Speaker's Secretary, with the assistance of a clerk, and in the presence of as many members as cared to look on, arranged the ballot without a hitch or a murmur of complaint from any one concerned. The sooner the public balloting is relegated to the same agency, the better it will be for the despatch of public business. With it should disappear the consequent wanton waste of time involved in members bodily bringing in their Bills, a performance that appropriated nearly half the sitting on the second day of the Session.[1]

The spread of the Syndicate contrivance would happily hasten the inevitable end. It was by means of the Syndicate, though it was not known by that name, or indeed at first known at all, that the Home Rule party managed in the Parliament of 1880-85 to monopolise the time pertaining to private members. Their quick eyes detected what is simple enough when explained—that the ballot system contained potentialities for increasing the chances of a Bill twenty or thirty fold. Suppose they had ten Bills or motions they desired to bring forward—they usually had more, but ten is sufficient to contemplate. These were arranged in accordance with their claim to

[1] This suggestion was promptly adopted. The ballot now takes place in one of the Committee rooms upstairs.

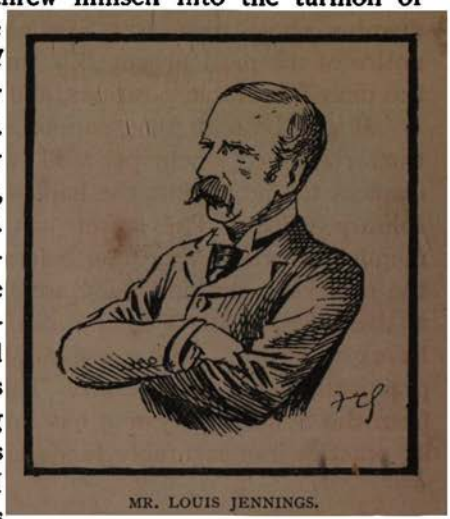
priority. Every member of the party wrote his name down in the ballot-book, thus securing an individual chance at the ballot. Whilst the ballot was in progress, each had in his hand a list of the Bills in their order of priority. The member whose name was first called by the Speaker gave notice of the most urgent Bill, the second and third taking the next favourable positions, and so on to the end.

It will be seen that, supposing fifty or sixty members thus combined, their pet Bill would have fifty or sixty chances to one against the hapless private member with his solitary voice. The secret was long kept, and the Irish members carried everything before them at the ballot. Now the murder is out, and there are almost as many Syndicates as there are private Bills. All can grow the flower now, for all have got the seed. But it naturally follows that competition is practically again made even. The advantage to be derived from the Syndicate system has appreciably decreased, whilst its practice immeasurably lengthens the process of balloting.

Louis Jennings.

Mr. Louis Jennings, though he sat on the same side of the House as Sir Walter Barttelot, and within a week or two of his neighbour's departure likewise answered to the old Lobby cry, "Who goes home?" was of a different type of Conservative. A man of literary training, generous culture, and wide knowledge of the world, he made his fame and fortune long before he entered the House of Commons. It was the late Mr. Delane whose quick eye discovered his journalistic ability, and gave him his first commission on the *Times*. He visited America in the service of that journal, and being there remained to take up the editorship of the *New York Times*, making himself and his journal famous by his successful tilting against what, up to his appearance in the list, had been the invincible Tweed conspiracy. He edited the *Croker Papers*, and wrote a "study" of Mr. Gladstone—a bitterly clever book, to which the Premier magnanimously referred in the generous tribute he took occasion to pay to the memory of the late member for Stockport.

Upon these two books Mr. Jennings's literary fame in this country chiefly rests. It would stand much higher if there were wider knowledge of another couple of volumes he wrote just before he threw himself into the turmoil of Parliamentary life. One is called *Field Paths and Green Lanes;* the other *Rambles among the Hills.* Both were published by Mr. Murray, and are now, I believe, out of print. They are well worth reproducing, supplying some of the most charming writing I know, full of shrewd observation, humorous fancy, and a deep, abiding sympathy with all that is beautiful in Nature. I thought I knew Louis Jennings pretty intimately in Parliamentary and social life, but I found a new man hidden in these pages—a beautiful, sunny nature, obscured in the ordinary relations of life by a somewhat brusque manner, and in these last eighteen months soured and cramped by a cruel disease. Jennings knew and loved the country as Gilbert White knew and loved Selborne. Now



MR. LOUIS JENNINGS.

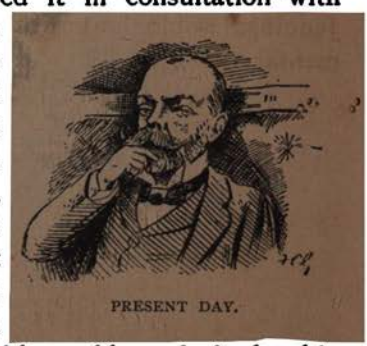
> His part in all the pomp that fills
> The circuit of the summer hills
> Is, that his grave is green.

His Parliamentary career was checked, as it turned out, finally destroyed, by an untoward incident. After Lord Randolph Churchill threw up the Chancellorship of the Exchequer and assumed a position of independence on a back bench, he found an able lieutenant in his old friend Louis Jennings. At that time Lord Randolph was feared on the Treasury Bench as much as he was hated. For a

Conservative member to associate himself with him was to be ostracised by the official Conservatives. A man of Mr. Jennings's position and Parliamentary ability was worth buying off, and it was brought to his knowledge that he might have a good price if he would desert Lord Randolph. He was not a man of that kind, and the fact that the young statesman stood almost alone was sufficient to attract him to his side.

AS CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER.

Up to an early date of the Session of 1890 the companionship, political and private, of Lord Randolph Churchill and Mr. Jennings was as intimate as had been any one of his lordship's personal connections with members of the Fourth Party. This alliance was ruptured under circumstances that took place publicly, but the undercurrent of which has never been fathomed. One Monday night, shortly after the opening of this Session of 1890, there appeared on the paper a resolution standing in the name of Mr. Jennings, framed in terms not calculated to smooth the path of the Conservative Government, just then particularly troubled. That Mr. Jennings had prepared it in consultation with Lord Randolph Churchill was an open secret. Indeed, Lord Randolph had undertaken to second it. Before the motion could be reached a debate sprang up, in which Lord Randolph interposed, and delivered a speech which, in Mr. Jennings's view, entirely cut the ground from under his feet. He regarded this as more than an affront—as a breach of faith, a blow dealt by his own familiar friend. On the moment, in the House, he



PRESENT DAY.

broke with Lord Randolph, tore up his amendment and the notes of his speech, and declined thereafter to hold any communion with his old friend.

No one, as I had opportunity of learning at the time, was more surprised than Lord Randolph Churchill at the view taken of the event by Mr. Jennings. He had not thought of his action being so construed, and had certainly been guiltless of the motive attributed to him. There was somewhere and somehow a misunderstanding. With Mr. Jennings it was strong and bitter enough to last through what remained of his life.

Whilst he did not act upon the first impulse communicated to one of his friends, and forthwith retire from public life, he with this incident lost all zest for it. Occasionally he spoke, choosing the level, unattractive field of the Civil Service Estimates. It was a high tribute to his power and capacity that on the few occasions when he spoke the House filled up, not only with the contingent attracted by the prospect of anything spicy, but by grave, financial authorities, Ministers and ex-Ministers, who listened attentively to his acute criticism. His public speaking benefited by a rare combination of literary style and oratorical aptitude. There was no smell of the lamp about his polished, pungent sentences. But they had the unmistakable mark of literary style. Had his physical strength not failed, and his life not been embittered by the episode alluded to, Louis Jennings would have risen to high position in the Parliamentary field.

CHAPTER V

MAY

THE history of Sir Charles Lewis, long time member for Derry, who sat in the last Parliament for North Antrim, is full of instruction for young members. Mr. Charles Lewis, as he was most familiarly known, entered the House as member for Derry in 1872, representing the city for just fourteen years. He was returned again at the General Election of 1886; and it was part of the evil fate that pursued him through his Parliamentary career that he should have been unseated on a petition. In the following February he was returned for North Antrim, and with the Salisbury Parliament disappeared from the political arena.

Sir Charles Lewis.

It was in the Session of 1874 that he bounded into fame. Conservatives were in high spirits, just entering under Mr. Disraeli's leadership upon a long lease of untrammelled power. Mr. Lewis, unnoticed in the preceding Parliament, came to the front in the earliest weeks of the new one, buzzing around in what some of his contemporaries were inclined to regard as an unnecessarily blatant manner. He attracted the notice of the *World*, just then founded, and, under the new and vigorous system of editorship inaugurated by Mr. Edmund Yates, boldly striking out for a leading place in weekly journalism. Mr. Lewis, whom his most relentless detractors would not accuse of lack of courage, resented the playfully bitter attacks made "Under the Clock" in the pages of the *World*, and brought before

Mr. Justice Coleridge and a special jury what, at the time, achieved some notoriety as the great White Waistcoat question.

It must be admitted that whether a member of the House of Commons wears a white waistcoat or a black one is no business of any one but himself; certainly has nothing to do with his political position. But of Mr. Lewis's once famous white waistcoat it may be said, as was written long ago in another connection, "which thing is an allegory." A white waistcoat worn in sultry weather with light tweed or other summer suit is appropriate to the occasion and pleasant to the eye. It was an indication of Mr. Lewis's character —perhaps too subtly, possibly erroneously, deduced—that in bleak March weather he should have breasted an angry House of Commons in a spacious white waistcoat, made all the more aggressive since it was worn in conjunction with a stubbornly-shaped black frock-coat and a pair of black trousers of uncompromising Derry cut. However it be, Mr. Lewis would stand no reflections upon his white waistcoat, and gave the new *World* an appreciable fillip on its career by haling it into court on a charge of libel, which Lord Coleridge dismissed without thinking it necessary to trouble a jury.

SIR CHARLES LEWIS.

That was not a hopeful start for a new member. But Mr. Lewis was not the kind of man to be daunted by repulse. It supplies testimony to his strong personality that, whilst more or less damaging himself, he succeeded on more than one occasion in seriously compromising his political friends and the House itself. In the whirlwind that followed

it was forgotten that it was Mr. Lewis (now Sir Charles, "B.B.K." as the Claimant put it) who brought about the appointment of the Parnell Commission and all it boded. When in May 1887 the *Times* published an article accusing Mr. Parnell of wilful and deliberate falsehood in denying his connection with P. J. Sheridan, Sir Charles Lewis reappeared on the scene, and, with protest of his desire that the Irish leader should have the earliest opportunity of clearing his character from the slur cast upon it, moved that the printers of the *Times* be brought to the Bar on a charge of breach of privilege. Mr. W. H. Smith, then fresh to the leadership, did his best to shake off this inconvenient counsellor. Sir Charles's proposal was burked; but he had laid the powder, which was soon after fired and led to successive explosions around the Parnell Commission.

That in later life Sir Charles Lewis should have taken this precise means of bringing himself once more to the front was fresh proof of his courage. It was on an analogous motion that he had made his earliest mark. A Select Committee sitting on Foreign Loans, the morning papers had, as usual, given some report of the proceedings. But though this was customary, it was, none the less, technically a breach of Standing Order. Mr. Charles Lewis, availing himself of the existence of the anachronism, moved that the printers of the *Times* and the *Daily News* be summoned to the Bar, charged with breach of privilege. Mr. Disraeli, then leader, did his best to get out of the difficulty. Mr. Lewis, in full flush with the white waistcoat, was inexorable. The printers were ordered to appear. They obeyed the summons, and the House finding itself in a position of ludicrous embarrassment, they were privily entreated to withdraw, and, above all, to be so good as to say nothing more on the matter.

Never since the House of Commons grew out of the Witenagemot has that august Assembly been brought so nearly into the position of Dogberry. "You shall comprehend all vagrom men; you are to bid any man stand, in the Prince's name." "How, if a' will not stand?" queried

the wary second watchman. "Why, then," said the unshakable City officer, "take no note of him, but let him go; and presently call the rest of the watch together, and thank God you are rid of a knave." Thus, in the spring of 1875, under the temporary leadership of Mr. Charles Lewis, did the House of Commons act towards the representatives of the *Times* and the *Daily News*, with the added embarrassment that the vagrom men in question had not refused to stand, but were even then in the lobby awaiting judgment.

In the following Session Mr. Lewis succeeded in stirring up another historic scene. It was he who brought under the notice of the House of Commons Mr. Lowe's historic declaration, made in a speech delivered at Retford, that before Mr. Disraeli had undertaken to pass a Bill creating the Queen Empress of India, two other Prime Ministers had been approached on the subject by Her Majesty, and had declined to be a party to the proceedings. Mr. Lewis was utterly devoid of sense of humour, a poverty that largely accounts for his failure in public life. The only joke he ever made was unconsciously produced. It happened one night in Committee of Supply, when, girding at the Irish members opposite, he sarcastically expressed the hope that the vote before the Committee "would not prove another fly in the ointment to spoil the digestion of honourable gentlemen opposite."

"Mr. Chairman," observed Mr. Delahunty, who then represented Waterford City, "we have many peculiarities in Ireland, but we don't eat ointment."

Thus, though Mr. Lewis had no humour in his own nature, he was occasionally the cause of its ebullition in others. The short note he elicited from Mr. Lowe when he assumed the right to call the right hon. gentleman to task for this indiscretion hugely delighted the House of Commons.

"Sir," snapped Mr. Lowe, "my recent speech at Retford contains nothing relating to you. I must therefore decline to answer your questions."

That would have shut up some men. It had the effect of inciting Mr. Charles Lewis to further action. He brought

forward a motion for a return setting forth the text of the oath of Privy Councillors, explaining that he desired to show that Mr. Lowe had, in the disclosure made, violated his oath. There followed an animated and angry scene. Disraeli, whilst dealing a back-handed blow at the inconvenient friend behind him, struck out at his ancient enemy, Lowe, whose statement he said was "monstrous, if true." He added that he was permitted to state on the personal authority of the Queen it was absolutely without foundation.

MR. LOWE.

These are some of the episodes writ large in a notable Parliamentary career. Their range shows that Mr. Lewis was a man of high, if ill-directed, capacity. No mere blunderer could have stirred the depths of the House of Commons as from time to time he did. He was, in truth —and here is the pity of it—a man of great ability, an admirable speaker. If his instincts had been finer and his training more severe he would have made a position of quite another kind in Parliamentary annals. Vain, restless, with narrow views and strong prejudices, he was his own worst enemy. But he will not have lived in vain if new members, entering the House from whatever quarter, sitting on which-ever side, will study his career, and apply its lesson. His character in its main bearings is by no means unfamiliar in the House of Commons. It was his special qualities of courage and capacity that made him so beneficially prominent as an example of what to avoid.

Cabinet Secrets.

Amongst the characteristics of the present Government that make them in Ministries a thing apart is the almost total absence of the air of mystery that, through the ages, has enveloped Cabinets and their consultations. Never in times ancient or modern was there on the eve of a new Session so little mystery about the

intentions of the Government. There was still practised by the morning newspapers the dear old farce of purporting to forecast the unknown. On the morning that opens the new Session there appears in all well-conducted morning papers an article delivered in the style of the Priestess Pythia in the temple at Delphi. Nothing is positively assumed, but the public are told that when the Queen's Speech is disclosed "it will probably contain promise of legislation" on such a head, whilst it will "doubtless be found that Her Majesty's Ministers have not been unmindful of" such another question.

This fashion was invented generations ago, either by the *Times* or the *Morning Chronicle*. The editor, having access to those gilded saloons to which Lord Palmerston once made historic reference, or profiting by personal acquaintance with a Minister, obtained more or less full knowledge of what the Queen's Speech would contain. But he was bound in honour to preserve his informant from possibly inconvenient consequences of his garrulity, and so the oracular style was adopted. When other papers, put on the track, obtained information in the same way they adopted the same quaint practice, till now it has become deeply ingrained in journalism. To-day, whilst there is no secret of the sources of information very properly conveyed to the Press on the eve of the Session, this same style of dealing with it, in which Mr. Wemmick would have revelled, is sedulously observed.[1]

At the beginning of this Session other than newspaper editors had been made aware of the general legislative intentions of the Government. Ministers speaking at various public meetings openly announced that their several departments were at the time engaged upon the preparation of particular Bills, the main directions of which were plainly indicated. It is true details of the Home Rule Bill were lacking. But that a Home Rule Bill was to be introduced, that it would take precedence of all other measures,

[1] On the accession of Edward VII. the practice was discontinued. His Majesty, delivering the speech in person, objected to its main purport being disclosed in advance.

and that it would be thorough enough to satisfy the Irish members, were commonplaces of information long before the Speech was read in the House of Lords. It used to be different. Within the range of recent memory, the publication of the Queen's Speech, or at least a forecast in the morning papers, was the first authoritative indication of the drift of legislation in the new Session.

Talking of this new departure with one of the oldest members of the House, he tells me a delightful story, which I have never found recalled in print, and it is too good to be buried in the pages of *Hansard*. At one time, in the run of the Parliament of 1859-65, Lord Palmerston being Premier, a rumour shook the political world, affirming the resignation of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Gladstone. The newspapers were neither so alert nor so well informed in those days, and the rumour drifted about, neither confirmed nor contradicted. At length, Mr. Horsman could stand the uncertainty no longer, and from his place in the House of Commons he asked Lord Palmerston whether there was any truth in the report.

LORD PALMERSTON.

The Premier approached the table in his gravest manner, and the crowded House was hushed in silence for the anticipated disclosure. He had, he said, just come from a meeting of the Cabinet Council, and could not pretend to be uninformed on the matter of the question submitted to him. The House, however, knew how stringent was the oath of a Privy Councillor, and how impossible it was for one in ordinary circumstances either to affirm or deny a report current as to what had taken place within its doors. Lord Palmerston was evidently struggling between a desire to tell something and disinclination to tamper with his oath. As

his manner grew more embarrassed, the interest of the House was quickened. All heads, including that of Mr. Horsman, were craned forward as he went on to observe that, perhaps, in the peculiar circumstances of the case, he would be justified in saying that, at the Council just held, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had been present and had displayed no sign of intended resignation.

"In fact," said Lord Palmerston, turning round to face Mr. Horsman, seated at the corner bench below the gangway, "*my right hon. friend has had his ear at the keyhole of the wrong door.*"

Lord Randolph Churchill.

The interest attached to Lord Randolph Churchill's reappearance on the Parliamentary scene proved one of the most interesting and significant incidents in the early days of the new Parliament. There is no doubt that, whatever be his present views and intentions, Lord Randolph years ago convinced himself that he was cut adrift from the political world, and that it had no charms to lure him back. He began by giving up to Newmarket what was meant for mankind, took a share in a stable, regulating his social and other engagements in London not by the Order Book of the House of Commons, but by the fixtures in the *Racing Calendar*. He was seen only fitfully in his place at the corner seat behind his esteemed friends and leaders then in office. A year later he went off to Mashonaland, and for a full Session Westminster knew him no more.

"NEWMARKET."

When the new Parliament began its sittings Lord

Randolph in private conversation was not less insistent as to the permanency of his act of renunciation. He was tired of politics, he said, and saw no future for himself in an assembly where at one time he was a commanding figure. Some of his friends, whilst puzzled and occasionally staggered by his insistence on this point, have always refused to accept his view of the possibilities of the future. A dyspeptic duck gloomily eyeing an old familiar pond might protest that never again would it enter the water. But as long as the duck lives and the water remains, they are certain to come together again. So it has been with Lord Randolph Churchill, who in this Session has, quite naturally, returned to his old haunts, and with a single speech regained much of his old position.

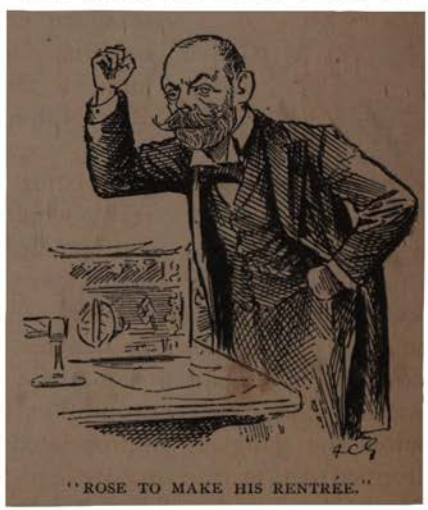
"MASHONALAND."

It is possible that accident, untoward in itself, may have had something to do with hastening the conclusion. When the House first met amid a fierce tussle for seats, Lord Randolph found his place at the corner of the second bench in peril of appropriation. If he desired to retain it, it would obviously be necessary for him to be down every day in time for prayers. Rather than face that discipline he would suffer the company of his old colleagues on the Front Opposition Bench. As a Privy Councillor and ex-Minister he had a right to a seat on that bench. One evening, coming in at question time and finding his seat below the gangway appropriated by an Irish member, he dropped on to the remote end of the Front Opposition Bench, hoping he did not intrude. His old colleagues warmly welcomed him, made much of him, entreated him to go up higher, and it came to pass that the House of

Commons grew accustomed to seeing the strayed reveller sitting in close companionship with Mr. Arthur Balfour.

"IN CLOSE COMPANIONSHIP."

It was from this quarter that, within the first fortnight of the Session, Lord Randolph rose to make his *rentrée* on the Parliamentary stage. It was characteristic of him that he sat silent through the long debate on the Address. That meant nothing, except the occupation of a certain space of time. There was no substantial amendment before the House, nor any prospect of the existence of the new Government being challenged on a division. But when the Home Rule Bill was brought in, things were different; there was a tangible substance round which statesmen might give battle.



"ROSE TO MAKE HIS RENTRÉE."

It was known that Lord Randolph would resume the debate on this particular night, and the thronged state of the House testified to the deathless personal interest he commands. Not since Mr. Gladstone had, a few nights earlier, risen to expound the Bill was the House so crowded. The Prince of Wales, accompanied by the Duke of York, returned to his seat over the clock, whilst noble lords

jostled each other in the effort to obtain seats in the limited space allotted to them. It happened that the *débutant* was destined to undergo a serious and unexpected ordeal. His time should have come not later than five o'clock, questions being then over, and the House permitted to settle down to the business of the day. But there intervened a riotous scene, arising on a question of breach of privilege. This extended over an hour, and throughout it Lord Randolph sat in a state of almost piteous nervousness.

"PITEOUS NERVOUSNESS."

That was a sore trial for the intending orator, but it reacted with even worse effect on the audience. The House of Commons, though it likes its dishes highly spiced, cares for only one such at a meal. Like the modest person in the hymn, "all it asks for is enough"; and in such a scene as that which raged round the Irish indictment of the *Times* for breach of privilege it found sufficiency. There are only two, or at most three, men in the House who could have kept the audience together after the prolonged excitement sprung upon it. Very few left their seats when, at six o'clock, Lord Randolph Churchill appeared at the table.

What had just happened, taken in conjunction with this peculiar position, plainly told upon him. He was nervous, occasionally to the point of being inaudible, and did not mend matters by violently thumping the box at the precise moment when otherwise the conclusion of his sentence might have been heard. Some people said in their haste he was but the shadow of his former self, that he had done well all these years to remain in the background. But the

faults of this speech were all of manner. Those who listened closely, with whatever painful effort, recognised in it the old straightforward, vigorous blows, the keen insight, the lucid statement, the lofty standpoint from which the whole question was viewed with the gaze of a statesman rather than with the squint of a politician. Those whose opportunities were limited to reading a full report of the speech perceived even more clearly that Lord Randolph had lost none of his ancient power, had even, with added years and garnered experience, grown in weighty counsel.

His second speech, delivered on the Welsh Suspensory Bill, being free from the accidental circumstances that handicapped his first effort, confirmed this impression. Reassured in his position, confident of his powers, encouraged by a friendly audience, he equalled any of the earlier efforts that established his fame.

What will happen to Lord Randolph in the future is a matter which depends entirely upon the state of his physical health. His indispensability to the Conservative party is testified to by the eagerness with which hands are held out to him at the earliest indication of desire to return to the fold. That by his loyalty to the party he has earned such consideration is a truth not so fully recognised as it might be if he were less modest in putting forth a claim. If he had been a man of small mind and mean instincts, what a thorn in the flesh of Lord Salisbury, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Balfour he might have proved in the whole period following on his resignation up to the dissolution of the last Parliament!

CHAPTER VI

JUNE

SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT has been so long a familiar figure in the House of Commons, and has established so high a reputation, that it seems odd to speak of him as one of the successes of the new Session. But the phrase accurately describes his position. Circumstances connected with the personality of the Premier have given him opportunity to show what potentialities as Leader of the House modestly lurk behind his massive figure, and the result has been eminently satisfactory to his party and his friends. Sir William's early reputation was made as a brilliant swordsman of debate, most effective in attack. The very qualities that go to make success in that direction might lead to utter failure on the part of a Leader of the House.

Sir William Harcourt.

"MODESTLY LURKING."

The most fatal thing a Leader of the House of Commons could do would be to cultivate an aggressive manner. The

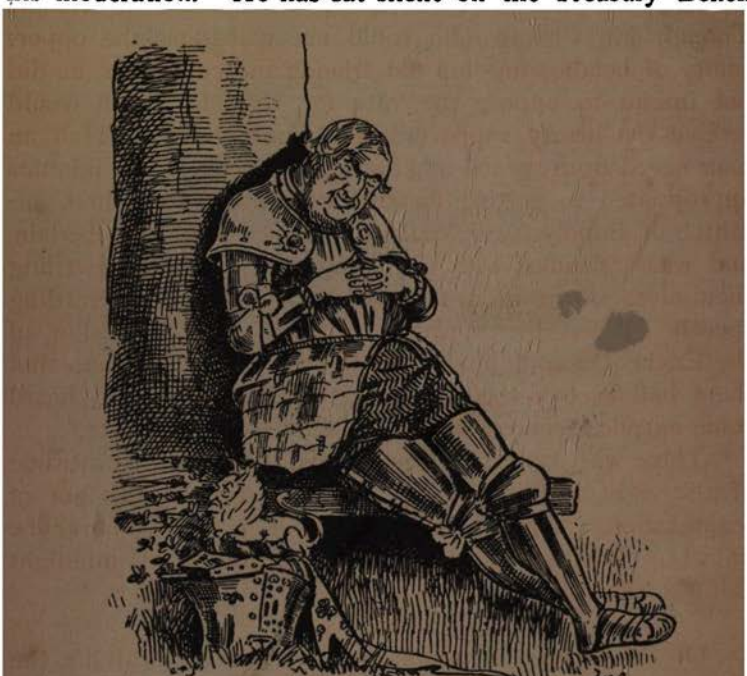
Leader must be a strong man—should be the strongest man on his side of the House. But his strength must be kept in reserve, and if he err on either side of this particular line, submissiveness should be his characteristic. The possession of this quality was the foundation of Mr. W. H. Smith's remarkable success as Leader. It is true he could not, had he tried, have varied his deferential attitude towards the House by one of sterner mould, and the House enjoys the situation more keenly if that alternative be existent. It took Mr. Smith as he was, and the two got on marvellously well together.

"AGGRESSIVE."

Nothing known of Sir William Harcourt's Parliamentary manner forbade the apprehension that, occupying the box-seat, there would be incessant cracking of the whip. It was difficult in advance to imagine how he would be able to resist the opportunity of letting the lash fall on the back of a restive or a stubborn horse. The opportunity of saying a smart thing, at whatever cost, seemed with him irresistible. If only he had his jest they might have his estate; in this case the estate of his party.

The House of Commons, as Mr. Goschen learned during the experiments in Leadership which preceded his disappearance from the front rank, may be led, but cannot be driven. It is curious that two of the most aggressive controversialists in the House, being temporarily called to the Leadership, have shown themselves profoundly impressed

with this truth. Like Lord Randolph Churchill, when he led the House, Sir William Harcourt appears on the Treasury Bench divested even of his side-arms. Like the Happy Warrior, his helmet is a hive for bees. His patience in time of trial has been pathetic, and, whatever may be his own feelings on the subject, the House has been amazed at his moderation. He has sat silent on the Treasury Bench



"THE HAPPY WARRIOR."

by the hour, with Mr. Arthur Balfour, Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Randolph Churchill, and other old familiar adversaries, trailing tempting coat-tails before him.

One night this Session, in debate on Uganda, Mr. Chamberlain interposed and delivered a brilliant, bitter speech, which deeply stirred a crowded House. It was drawing to the close of an important debate, and Mr. Chamberlain sat down at half-past eleven, leaving plenty

of time for the Leader of the House to reply. To an old Parliamentary war-horse the situation must have been sorely tempting. A party likes to be sent off into the division lobby with a rattling speech from the Front Bench. There was ample time for a brisk twenty minutes' canter, and the crowded and excited House were evidently in the vein to be shown sport. But there was nothing at stake on the division. Though Mr. Chamberlain could not withstand the opportunity of belabouring his old friends and colleagues, he did not intend to oppose the vote for Uganda, which would receive the hearty support of the Conservatives. Half an hour saved from speech-making would mean thirty minutes appropriated to getting forward with other votes in Committee of Supply. Sir William followed Mr. Chamberlain, and was welcomed with a ringing cheer, members settling themselves down in anticipated enjoyment of a rattling speech. When the applause subsided the Chancellor of the Exchequer contented himself with the observation that there had been a useful debate, the Committee had heard some excellent speeches, "and now let us get the vote."

There was something touching in the depressed attitude of the right hon. gentleman as he performed this act of renunciation. What it cost him will, probably, never be known. But before progress was reported at midnight half a dozen votes had been taken.

The Whips.

Of the various forms ambition takes in political life, the most inscrutable is that which leads a man to the Whip's room. In Parliamentary affairs the Whip fills a place analogous to that of a sub-editor on a newspaper. He has (using the phrase in a Parliamentary sense) all the kicks and few of the halfpence. With the sub-editor, if anything goes wrong in the arrangement of the paper he is held responsible, whilst if any triumph is achieved, no halo of the resultant glory for a moment lights up the habitual obscurity of his head. It is the same, in its way, with the Whip. His work is incessant, and for the most part is drudgery. His reward is a possible Peerage, a Colonial

Governorship, a First Commissionership of Works, a Postmaster-Generalship, or, as Sir William Dyke found at the close of a tremendous spell of work, a Privy Councillorship.

SIR WILLIAM DYKE.

Yet it often comes to pass that the fate of a Ministry and the destiny of the Empire depend upon the Whip. A bad division, even though it be plainly due to accidental circumstances, habitually influences the course of a Ministry, sometimes giving their policy a crucial turn, and at least exercising an important influence on the course of business in the current Session.

For other members of the Ministry there is occasional surcease from work, and some opportunity for recreation. For the Whip there is none. He begins his labour with the arrival of the morning post, and keeps at it till the Speaker has left the Chair, and the principal door-keeper standing out on the matting before the doorway cries aloud, "The usual time!"

MR. JARRETT, DOOR-KEEPER.

That ceremony is a quaint relic of far-off days before penny papers were, and the means of communicating with members were circumscribed. It is the elliptical form of making known to members that at the next sitting the Speaker will take the Chair at the usual time. For ordinary members, even for

Ministers, unless they must be in their place to answer a question, "the usual time" means whatever hour best suits their convenience. The Whip is in his room even before the Speaker takes the Chair, and it is merely a change of the scene of labour from his office at the Treasury. He remains till the House is up, whether the business be brisk or lifeless.

In truth, at times when the House is reduced almost to a state of coma, the duties of the Whip become more arduous and exacting. These are the occasions when gentle malice loves to bring about a count-out. If it is a private members' night the Whips have no responsibility in the matter of keeping a House, and have even been suspected of occasionally conniving in the beneficent plot of dispersing it. But just now private members' nights stand in the same relation to the Session as the sententious traveller found to be the case with snakes in Iceland. There are none. Every night is a Government night, and weariness of flesh and spirit naturally suggests a count-out. The regular business of the Whip is to see that there are within call sufficient members to frustrate the designs of the casual counter-out.

"BOBBY" SPENCER.

Mr. Gladstone and other members of the Cabinet, on many dull nights of this Session, have been cheered on crossing the lobby by the sight of Mr. "Bobby" Spencer gracefully tripping about, note-book in hand, holding an interminable succession of members in brief but animated conversation. He is not making a book for the Derby or Goodwood, as one might suspect. "Do you dine here to-night?" is his insinuating inquiry, and till he has listed more than enough men to "make a House" in case of need, he does not feel assured of the safety of the British Constitution, and therefore does not rest.

"Bobby" Spencer.

This is part of the ordinary work of the average night. When an important division is impending, the labour imposed upon the Whip is Titanic. He, of course, knows every individual member of his flock. With a critical division pending he must know more, ascertaining where he is and, above all, where he will be on the night of the division. It is at these crises that the personal characteristics of the Whip are tested. A successful Whip should be almost loved, and not a little feared. He should ever wear the silken glove, but there should be borne in upon the consciousness of those with whom he has to deal that it covers an iron hand.

MR. MARJORIBANKS.

It happens just now that both political parties in the House of Commons are happy in the possession of almost model Whips. As was said by a shrewd observer, no one looking at Mr. Marjoribanks or Mr. Akers-Douglas as they lounge about the Lobby "would suppose they could say 'Bo!' to a goose." The goose, however, would do well not to push the experiment of forbearance too far. All through the last Parliament Mr. Akers-Douglas held his men together with a light, firm hand that was the admiration and despair of the other side. Mr. Marjoribanks has, up to this present time of writing, maintained the highest standard of success in Whipping.

The Whip's post, though hard enough, is much lightened by adoption of the twelve o'clock rule. Time was, at no distant date, when for some months in the Session Whips were accustomed to go home in broad daylight. It is true the House at that time met an

All-night Sittings.

hour later in the afternoon, but the earlier buckling to is a light price to pay for the certainty that shortly after midnight all will be over. Even now the twelve o'clock rule may be suspended, and this first Session of the new Parliament has shown that all-night sittings are not yet impossible. But so unaccustomed is the present House to them, that when one became necessary on the Mutiny Bill every one and every thing was found unprepared. In the old days, when Mr. Biggar was in his prime, the commissariat were ever ready for an all-night sitting. When, this Session, the House sat up all night on the Mutiny Bill, the larder was cleared out in the first hour after midnight.

It is not generally known how nearly the valuable life of the Chairman of Ways and Means was on that occasion sacrificed at the post of duty. Having lost earlier chances by remaining in the Chair, it was only at four o'clock in the morning he was rescued from famine by the daring foraging of Mr. Herbert Gladstone, who, the House being cleared for one of the divisions, brought in a cup of tea and a poached egg on toast, which the Chairman disposed of at the table.

MR. MELLOR.

Mr. Mellor is an old Parliamentary campaigner, and remembers several occasions when, living injudiciously near the House, he was brought out of bed to assist in withstanding obstruction. Being called up one morning by an imperative request to repair to the House, he observed a man violently ringing at the bell of the house of a neighbour, also a member of the House of Commons. On returning two hours later, he found the man still there, diligently ringing at the bell.

"What's the matter?" he asked; "any one ill?"

"No, sir," said the man. "Lord Richard Grosvenor sent

me to bring Mr. —— down to the House, and said I was not to come away without him."

"Ah, well, you can go off now; the House is up."

Mr. ——, it turned out on subsequent inquiry, had gone down to Brighton with his family, and the servants left at home did not think it necessary to answer a bell rung at this untimely hour.

"Paired for the Night."

It was about the same time, in the Parliament of 1880, that another messenger from the Government Whip went forth in the early morning in search of a member. He lived in Queen Anne's Mansions, and the messenger explaining the urgency of his errand, the night porter conducted him to the bedroom door of the sleeping senator. Succeeding in awakening him, he delivered his message.

"Give my compliments to Lord Richard Grosvenor," said the wife of the still somnolent M.P.; "tell him my husband has gone to bed, and is paired for the night."

MR. JACOBY.

Bare-headed.

It is an old tradition, observed to this day, though the origin of it is lost in the obscurity of the Middle Ages, that a Whip shall not appear in the Lobby with his head covered. It is true Mr. Marjoribanks does not observe this rule, but he is alone in the exception. All his predecessors, as far as I can remember, conformed to the regulation. In the last Parliament the earliest intimation of the formation of a new Radical party was the appearance in the Lobby of Mr. Jacoby without his hat. Inquiry excited by this phenomenon led to the disclosure that the Liberal opposition had broken off into a new section. There was some doubt as to who was the leader, but none as to the fact that Mr. Jacoby and Mr. Philip Stanhope were the

Whips. Mr. Stanhope was not much in evidence. But on the day Mr. Jacoby accepted the appointment he locked up his hat and patrolled the Lobby with an air of sagacity and an appearance of brooding over State secrets, which at once raised the new party into a position of importance.

Dick Power, most delightful of Irishmen, most popular of Whips, made through the Session regular play with his hat. Any one familiar with his habits would know how the land lay from the Irish quarter. If Mr. Power appeared hatless in the Lobby, a storm was brewing, and before the Speaker left the Chair there would, so to speak, be wigs on the green. If his genial face beamed from under his hat as he walked about the Lobby the weather was set fair, at least for the sitting.

One of the duties of the junior Whips is to keep sentry-go at the door leading from the Lobby to the cloak-room, and so out into Palace Yard. When a division is expected, no member may pass out unless he is paired. That is not the only way by which escape from the House may be made. A member desirous of evading the scrutiny of the Whips might find at least two other ways of quitting the House. It is, however, a point of honour to use only this means of exit, and no member under whatsoever pressure would think of skulking out.

The winsome Wiggin.

"SKULKING OUT."

For many nights through long Sessions, Lord Kensington sat on the bench to the left of the doorway, a terror to members who had pressing private engagements elsewhere, when a division was even possible. There is only one well-authenticated occasion when a member, being unpaired, succeeded in getting past Lord Kensington, and the result was not encouraging.

One night, Mr. Wiggin (now Sir Henry) felt wearied with long attendance on his Parliamentary duties. There came upon him a weird longing to stroll out and spend an hour in a neighbouring educational establishment much frequented by members. He looked towards the doorway, but there was Lord Kensington steadfast at his post. Glancing again, Mr. Wiggin thought the Whip was asleep. Casually strolling by him he found that this was the case, and with something more than his usual agility, he passed through the doorway.

Returning at the end of an hour he found Lord Kensington still at his post, and more than usually wide awake.

"You owe me £25," said Mr. Wiggin.

"How?" cried the astonished Whip.

"If," said Mr. Wiggin, producing his unencumbered watch-chain and dangling it, "you hadn't been asleep just now, I wouldn't have got past you; if I hadn't got past you, I wouldn't have dropped in at the Aquarium; and if I hadn't looked in at the Aquarium, I shouldn't have had my watch stolen."

Quod erat demonstrandum.

Il y a Power *et* Power.

In the high tide of the Parnell invasion of the House of Commons, there happened an accident that excited much merriment. Mr. O'Connor Power—one of the ablest debaters the early Irish party brought into the House—had prepared a speech for a current debate. Desirous that his constituents should be at least on a footing of equality with an alien House of Commons, he sent a verbatim copy in advance to the editor of the local paper, an understanding being arrived at that it was not to be published till signal was received from Westminster that the hon. member was on his feet. It happened that Mr. O'Connor Power failed on that night to catch the Speaker's eye. Mr. Richard Power was more successful, and the local editor receiving through the ordinary Press agency intimation that "Mr. Power opposed the Bill," at once jumped to the conclusion

that this was the cue for the verbatim speech. Mr. Power was speaking; there was not the slightest doubt that Mr. O'Connor Power, when he did speak, would oppose the Bill. So the formes were locked, the paper went to press, and the next morning County Mayo rang with the unuttered eloquence of its popular member, and Irishmen observed with satisfaction how, for once, the sullen Saxon had had his torpid humour stirred, being frequently incited to "loud cheers" and "much laughter."

I have read somewhere that it was a kindred calamity of a public speaker which led to Thackeray's first appearance in print. At a time when the century was young, and the author of *Vanity Fair* was a lad at Charterhouse, Richard Lalor Sheil, the Irish lawyer and orator, had promised to deliver a speech to a public meeting assembled on Penenden Heath. In those days there were no staffs of special reporters, no telegraphs, nor anything less costly than post-chaises wherewith to establish rapid communication between country platforms and London newspaper offices. Sheil, rising to the height of the occasion, wrote out his speech, and, before leaving town, sent copies to the leading journals, in which it, on the following morning, duly appeared. **Thackeray on the Subject.**

Alack! when the orator reached the Heath he found the platform in possession of the police, who prohibited the meeting and would have none of the speech. The incident was much talked of, and the boy Thackeray set to and wrote in verse a parody on the printed but unspoken oration. Here is the last verse, as I remember it—

> "What though these heretics heard me not?"
> Quoth he to his friend Canonical;
> "My speech is safe in the *Times*, I wot,
> And eke in the *Morning Chronicle*."

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CHAPTER VII

JULY

THE subdivision of parties arising out of the adoption of Home Rule as a principal plank in Mr. Gladstone's platform has worked a curious and notable effect upon conditions of debate in the House of Commons. Time was when the House was divided between two political parties, one calling themselves Whigs or Liberals, the other Tories or Conservatives. When a member took part in debate he faced the foe, having the satisfaction of being surrounded and sustained by the company of friends. Now a member rising on either side does not precisely know where he is. The whole assembly is so inextricably mixed up, that whichever way one turns he is certain to find unfriendly faces. The position of affairs is akin to that of a close mêlée on the battle-field. A battery in excellent position is afraid to fire lest in aiming at the enemy it may slay friends.

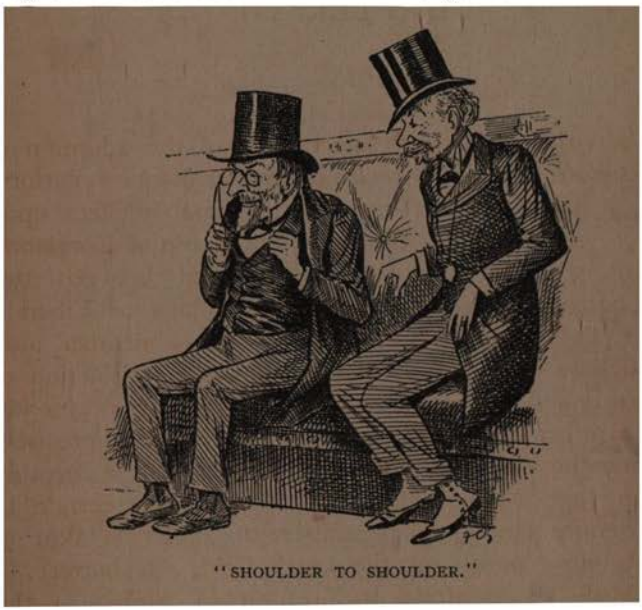
Parties and Places.

The new departure was marked on the birth of the Parliament of 1880. Through the Parliament of 1874, the Irish members, forming in accordance with their habit and customs part of the regular Opposition, sat together below the gangway, at the Speaker's left hand. When Lord Beaconsfield was routed at the polls, and Mr. Gladstone took his place on the Treasury Bench, the Opposition in the House of Commons crossed over to the Ministerial side. But the Irish members resolved to remain where they

were. A change of Ministry, more or less, was nothing to them.

Tros Tyriusve mihi nullo discrimine agetur. All Saxon Governments who refused to grant Home Rule to Ireland were their natural enemies, and they would remain with their back to the wall, their face to the foe.

This was a startling innovation on Parliamentary practice, made the more embarrassing by the circumstance that it brought the Irish members into close personal contact with



"SHOULDER TO SHOULDER."

a class that had been especially bitter in its animosity. Mr. Biggar, who, Imperial politics apart, was understood to be something in the pork and bacon line, sat on the same bench shoulder to shoulder with the son of a duke. Other members of the party similarly circumstanced at home more or less enjoyed analogous companionship. First, there was some doubt in the Conservative breast whether these things might be. Since Parliaments were, it had been the custom for the Opposition to cross over in a body on a change of Ministry, and question was raised whether the Irish members might

vary the custom. The Speaker, privately consulted, declared he was powerless in the matter. A duly returned member of the House of Commons may sit anywhere he pleases except on the Treasury Bench. Even the Front Opposition Bench, as some years later the House had occasion to learn, is not sacred to the use of ex-Ministers, although it is usually reserved for their convenience. It belongs by ancient right to Privy Councillors, and any such may, if he pleases, take his seat there, even though he never served in the Ministry.

Thus when the late Mr. Beresford Hope was evicted by the Fourth Party from his corner seat below the gangway, he crossed over and found a resting-place on the Front Opposition Bench, retaining it till his death. The gentleman who is now Lord Cubitt, being a Privy Councillor, always asserted his right to address the House from the table.

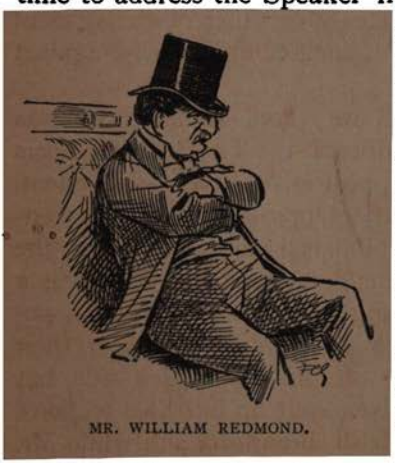
The Irish members, remaining in their old quarters, got along through the Parliament of 1880 much better than was at the outset expected. The Fourth Party set up in business for themselves at the corner of the Front Bench below the gangway. On the two benches behind them the Irish members were massed, and Lord Randolph Churchill frequently found the contiguity convenient when he had occasion to consult Mr. Tim Healy or other of the allies of the Constitutional party, then making common cause against Mr. Gladstone's Government.

That arrangement was all very well in its way; was indeed not without logical justification. The Irish members were at the time in deadly opposition to the Government, and that they should sit on the Opposition side was convenient and desirable. It established and maintained the conditions that combatants should face each other. It is a different thing now, the localising of parties being in a hopelessly intermixed state. The Irish members still keep their old places below the gangway on the Opposition side, but being there they find themselves split up into two sections. There are two kings in the Irish Brentford, and while Mr. Justin M'Carthy, leader of the larger section, sits with his friends on the third bench, Mr. John Redmond occupies the

corner seat on the fourth bench. Nor does this division represent the full measure of variety. Mr. William Redmond has planted himself out in the very arcanum of Toryism, on a back bench behind ex-Ministers. There he sits, solitary among the gentlemen of England, none holding converse with him, and he, apparently, thoroughly enjoying isolation. From time to time the House is startled by hearing from this quarter explosive sentences, expressing sentiments foreign to those usually associated with Our Old Nobility, from whose citadel they fall upon the shocked ear.

MR. JOHN REDMOND.

The Labour Party is another new section developed in the modern House of Commons. They are exceedingly few in number, their political object is capable of narrow definition, and they, of all people, might be expected to sit together. But they, also, are divided. Mr. Keir Hardie and Mr. John Burns rise from time to time to address the Speaker from a back bench below the gangway on the Opposition side, whilst Mr. Havelock Wilson and other accredited representatives of the working classes sit immediately opposite, on the Ministerial side. When any Minister or private member desires to address himself personally and directly to Labour questions, he is thus compelled to divide his attention between diverse sides of the House.



MR. WILLIAM REDMOND.

The position of the Dissentient Liberals is, perhaps, on the whole, most embarrassing, as being contrary to the traditions and convenient forms of

the House. It is a little better in the present Parliament, since the Treasury Bench is free from the invasion to which Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues were subjected when they were tenants on the Front Opposition Bench. Mr. Chamberlain, Sir Henry James, and Mr. Heneage now sit with the rank-and-file of their party, not, as heretofore, mixed up with the Liberal leaders. But their quarters are selected on the Ministerial side. They sit surrounded by gentlemen from whom, on political grounds, they are separated by feelings of bitter animosity.

The effect of this state of things is, to a considerable extent, paralytic on debate. It affects both orator and audience. It is a habit strongly marked with Mr. Gladstone, and common in degree with other speakers, to turn and face supporters or Opposition according as the current passage in his argument may suggest. Now, as far as ordered lines of subdivision are concerned, there is neither Ministerial host nor Opposition. With a larger application of Mr. Bright's famous simile, it may be said that the House of Commons is like one of those hairy terriers of which it is difficult to distinguish between either extremity. Mr. Gladstone, driving home an argument in favour of Home Rule, turning with eager face towards the benches opposite, finds himself preaching to the converted, being confronted by some eighty Irishmen, the very advance guard of his own party. Turning round with smiling face and palms outstretched for the sympathy and applause of the Liberal party, he meets the cold glance of Mr. Chamberlain's eye, and sees beyond that right hon. gentleman the buff waistcoat of Mr. Courtney.

These are chilling influences which tell even upon Mr. Gladstone, and are fatal to the success of less experienced debaters. The consequence of the existing state of things works even fuller effect upon the audience. It is responsible for the marked decline observable this Session of the practice of cheering. It will be seen from the slight sketch given of the localities of sections of party that it is now physically impossible to get up a bout of that cheering and counter-cheering which up to recent times was one of the most

inspiring episodes in Parliamentary debate. That is possible only when the audience is massed in two clearly-defined sections. One cheers a phrase dropped by the member addressing the House; the other side swiftly responds; the cheer is fiercely taken up by the party who started it, echoed on the other side, and so the game goes forward. Now, as will be clearly seen, if the Conservative Opposition set up a cheer the Irish members sitting among them must remain silent, the Dissentient Liberals observing the same attitude

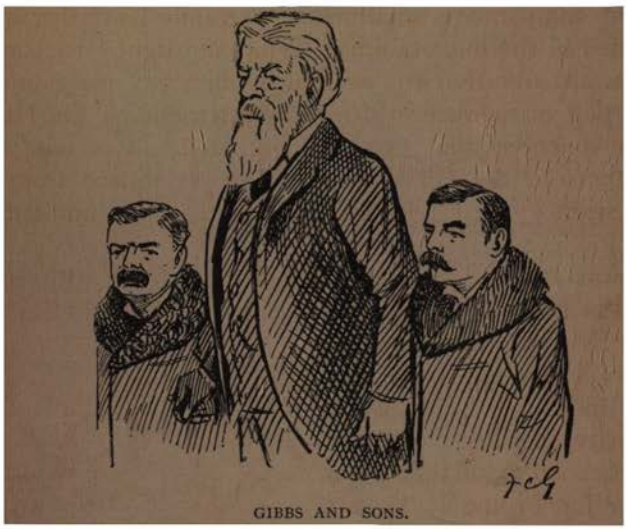
CHILLING INFLUENCES.

when the Ministerialists break forth into applause. They take their turn when opportunity presents itself. But the whole thing is inextricably mixed up and loses its significance. Parliamentary cheering to be effective must be spontaneous, and, within the limits of party, unanimous. Hopelessly embarrassed by the situation, members are discontinuing the practice of cheering, thus withdrawing a wholesome stimulus from debate.

One of the minor consequences of the withdrawal of Mr. Henry Samuelson from Parliamentary life is that there

simultaneously disappeared from the House of Commons an interesting and unique phenomenon. It is a common, and perhaps natural, thing that sons sharing Parliamentary honours with their fathers should feel themselves embarrassingly overwhelmed with the parental position and authority. The present House contains several examples which will instantly suggest themselves. An additional one was spared by the strategic movement of Mr. Hicks Gibbs. In the last Parliament that eminent

Fathers and Sons.



GIBBS AND SONS.

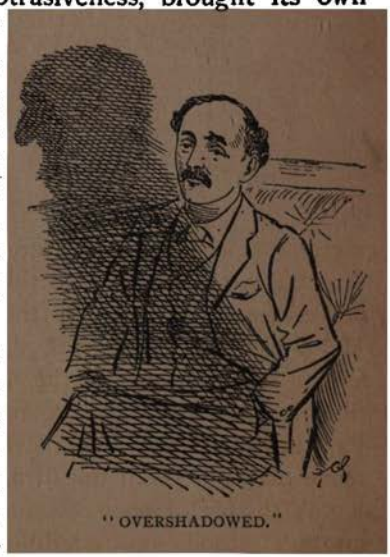
merchant appropriately represented the City of London. At the last General Election one of his sons stood with fair chance of election by the St. Albans Division of Herts. Mr. Gibbs thereupon retired from Parliamentary life, transferring his safe seat for the City of London to his elder son, thus leaving two able young men to make their way in Parliamentary life, unembarrassed by the presence on the scene of the head of the firm.

With Mr. Henry Samuelson and his respected father matters stood on a different footing. Mr. Bernhard Samuelson, member for Banbury in the Parliament of 1880, is a man of sterling ability, a Fellow of the Royal Society,

an ironmaster at Middlesbrough, and (though no one would suspect it) a Knight of the Legion of Honour. As an authority on educational matters, Banbury always thought he took the cake. But he was nothing in the House of Commons when son Henry appeared on the scene. The Parliamentary relations of the two were in their way a realisation of a phase of Mr. Anstey's immortal *Vice Versa*. Possibly it would have been a difficult matter for any one to impress Mr. Henry Samuelson with a sense of his own comparative smallness. Certainly his father never succeeded in the undertaking. What threatened to become an awkward situation was averted by an act of magnanimity on the part of Samuelson *fils*, for which perhaps the House, though it knew him, was not prepared. Reversing the movements in the Gibbs family, the son retired from the Parliamentary scene, leaving his father in undisturbed possession.

Samuelson père et fils.

It was a noble act, but in this case virtue, with something less than ordinary unobtrusiveness, brought its own reward. The member for Banbury, relieved from the moral incubus of his son's superiority, speedily blossomed into a baronetcy, and the former member for Frome in his act of self-abnegation was, all unknowingly, preparing the way for his becoming the second Baronet of Bodicote Grange.



"OVERSHADOWED."

The most familiar and the supremest case known to the House of Commons of a son being overshadowed by the reputation and renown of a father is found in the case of the member for Leeds. Mr. Herbert Gladstone is a man of wide culture, rare knowledge of public affairs, shrewd judgment, tireless

Herbert Gladstone.

energy, and sound common-sense. Moreover, he is, as is better known in the country than in the House of Commons, an effective speaker. One of the most constant attendants on the business of the House, his name standing high in the derelict Buff Book for the number of divisions he has taken part in, he never, or hardly ever, speaks in the House of Commons.

His elder brother, when he sat in the House, occupied a precisely similar position. To him it was more natural, being of a gentle, retiring disposition, with no affinity for public life. He sat in the House of Commons for many years, but I do not remember hearing him speak. He had a curious way of entering by a doorway under the gallery and timidly making for a back seat. He habitually wore an apologetic air, as if he really begged you to excuse him going about as "Mr. Gladstone," an appellation shared in common with his father.

Herbert Gladstone is cast in another mould. He took to politics and the House of Commons with the same avidity as did William Pitt. But when Pitt entered the House his illustrious father had been dead two years. Fourteen years earlier he had quitted the Commons for the Lords, and only a few contemporaries of the young member for Appleby were in a position to make comparisons between father and son. Herbert Gladstone is returned to the House his father still adorns, and in such circumstances has as much chance of shining there as the most reputable planet enjoys when the sun is at meridian. He long ago deliberately abandoned the endeavour, and his energy, which is great, and his capacity, which is high, are devoted to the service of the party in the country.

Mr. Herbert Gladstone has, perhaps, too acute a sense of the proper feeling in his peculiar circumstances. Talking on this subject he once told me that whilst he can speak without any embarrassment on a public platform, he can never rise to address a meeting which numbers his father among the audience without faltering tongue and trembling knees. I remember something like ten years ago an interesting

scene in which a crowded House took the kindliest interest. At that time Mr. Henry Northcote sat for Exeter, and Mr. Herbert Gladstone had at the General Election been elected for Leeds. Mr. Gladstone was Premier, and Sir Stafford Northcote sat on the Front Bench as Leader of the Opposition, daily striving with the Fourth Party, then in the plenitude of its young life. It was arranged that in some debate the two young scions of the opposing houses should in succession make their maiden speech. I forget what the occasion was, but well remember the crowded House, and on the two Front Benches, facing each other, the fathers, critical, kindly, and on the whole well pleased, each hastening to pay a compliment to the other's son.

MR. JUSTIN M'CARTHY.

The M'Carthys.

It is difficult to picture one of the gentle mood and instinctively retiring habits of Mr. Justin M'Carthy hampering any one with a consciousness of his superiority. His modesty is even more conspicuous than his capacity, which seems an exaggerated form of speech. But undoubtedly the presence of the father, even so gentle a presence as this, operated in the direction of effacing the son. Huntley M'Carthy is a young man who might well have been expected to make a high position for himself in the House of Commons. Of good presence, with pleasant voice, a pretty turn of phrasing, a mind stored with learning, familiar with history and politics, touched with the tender light of poetry, he should have gone straight to the heart of the House of Commons. But he rarely spoke, and took an early opportunity of gracefully retiring from the scene.

Mr. Bernard Coleridge in this, at least, resembles Pitt, that he is not handicapped by the presence in the House of an illustrious father. Still, like the younger Pitt, he has the

further advantage of his father's disappearance from the scene at a period so remote that there are few of his contemporaries in the present House. It is doubtful, moreover, whether the member for the Attercliffe Division of Sheffield would have been embarrassed had his father still been sitting for Exeter. We must not be misled by the coincidence that he bears the same Christian name as the young gentleman who sat for Frome in the Parliament of 1874. If any movement of the kind then suggested by family devotion had been entered upon, it is not probable that Bernard Coleridge, like Bernhard Samuelson, would have retired from the scene, so that his father might have fuller scope. He is too deeply impressed with the debt he owes his country to permit natural modesty or family affection to draw him into taking a back seat. He is filled with that ambition which distinguished the acceptable youth who figures in *Le Nouveau Jeu*. "Soyons de notre époque," says Costard. "Je veux même être plus que le jeune homme d'aujourd'hui. Je veux être le jeune homme de demain, d'après-demain si possible." For Mr. Coleridge possibility looms larger even than this, nothing more than the middle of next week bounding his clear, steadfast vision.

Mr. Coleridge.

MR. CONINGSBY DISRAELI.

Mr. Coningsby Disraeli is not handicapped in the Parliamentary race by overbearing connection with the fame of his father. That gentleman was not unknown at Westminster, he having through many years occupied a useful position in the legislative machinery, serving in wig and gown as one of the clerks at the table of the House of Lords. It was from that comparatively humble position he, on a February afternoon in 1877, watched the entrance on

Mr. Coningsby Disraeli.

a new scene of his illustrious brother. It chanced that on this day the Queen opened Parliament in person, and made her entry with all the ceremony proper to the rare occasion. But for the distinguished and illustrious crowd that peopled the chamber from floor to topmost gallery the most attractive figure in the pageant was that disguised in red cloak tipped with ermine, who bore aloft a sword sheathed in jewelled scabbard, and whom the world thenceforward knew as Benjamin Earl of Beaconsfield.

It is with the Parliamentary fame of his uncle that the young member for Altrincham has to struggle. To be a Disraeli in the House of Commons is to fill a place from the occupant of which much is expected. It is to Mr. Coningsby Disraeli's credit in the past, full of hope for the future, that he has hitherto borne himself so modestly that few members know his personal appearance or where he sits. Before he found a seat in the House he threatened to fall into courses of conduct that alarmed his best friends. He took to writing in the *Times* on questions of Imperial policy, lucubrations the style of which was plainly founded on his uncle's earliest and worst style. This procedure seemed to portend that when he once took his seat he would be incessantly rising from it and putting things straight generally. Happily he has taken the wiser course, sitting attentive and watchful, endeavouring to learn before he begins to teach. Up to this present time of writing he has interposed only once in the proceedings of the House, and that was to ask a pertinent question, addressed to the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Probably for him also "the time will come when you *shall* hear him." He is judiciously preparing for it by a reasonable interval of silence.

No one regarding Lord Wolmer would, with whatsoever imaginative fancy, be able to construct out of him the Earl of Selborne as he is known in the House of Lords and in other phases of public life. It is impossible to conceive two men of more widely different temperament, personal appearance, or modes of thought.

L'Allegro and *Il Penseroso.*

Lord Selborne might stand as *Il Penseroso*, whilst Lord Wolmer might dance as *L'Allegro*. There are few members of the present House of Commons who recollect Sir Roundell Palmer seated on the Treasury Bench as Attorney-General. Lord Palmerston was Prime Minister at the time; Mr. Gladstone was for the third time Chancellor of the Exchequer; Sir George Grey had lately succeeded Cornewall Lewis at the Home Office; Lord John Russell was Foreign Secretary; Lord Westbury was Lord Chancellor; and Sir Robert Peel was just beginning to tire of the Irish Office, because, as he found to be the case in those halcyon days, there was not enough to keep the Chief Secretary going.

LORD SELBORNE.

Lord Wolmer is relieved from competition in the House of Commons with the memory of his father. He will possibly never rival his father's fame, but he really means business in the political world. He had an admirable training as Whip to the Dissentient Liberal party when it was led in the Commons by Lord Hartington. When he was returned for Edinburgh in the new Parliament, he thought the time had come when he might better serve his country in the Legislative Chamber than in the bustling Lobby. Early in his new career he received a slight check, having, with the exuberance of comparative youth and extreme conviction, spoken of the Irish members in terms that led to an awkward debate on a question of breach of privilege. But he survived that, and though it led to a momentary pause in his public

LORD WOLMER.

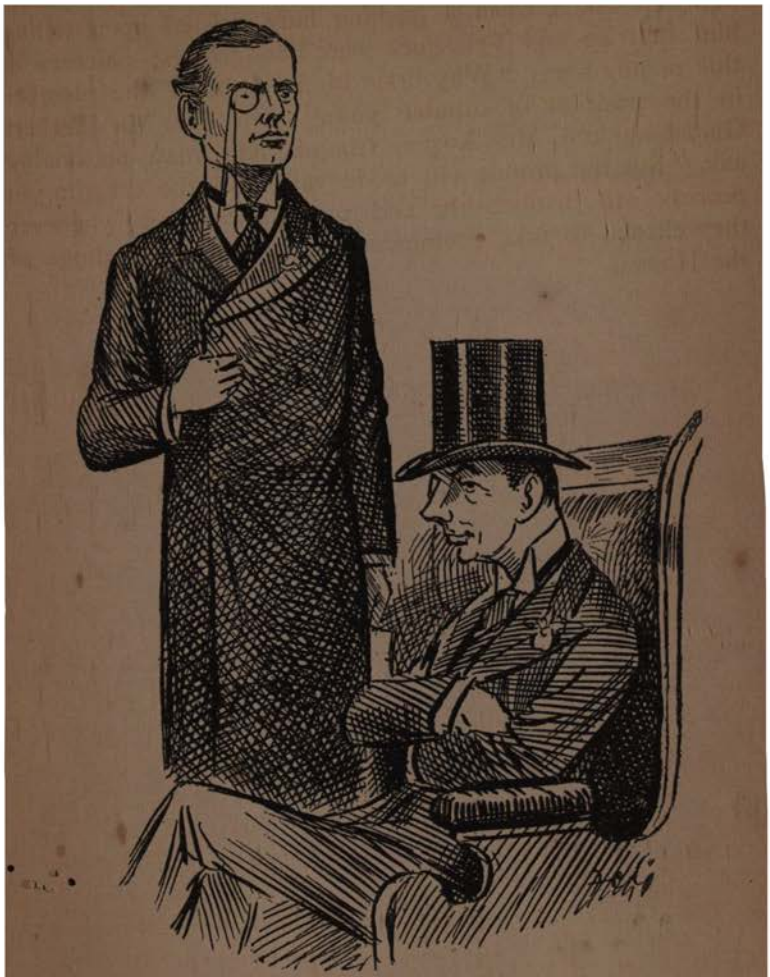
conversation on current affairs, it would not be safe to regard the influence as other than temporary.

Mr. Austen Chamberlain supplies perhaps the most striking example in the present House of the embarrassment of a young member whose father stands in the front rank of House of Commons' debaters. **The Chamberlains.** On the Second Reading of the Home Rule Bill he delivered a maiden speech that, for any other young member, would have established a Parliamentary position. Mr. Gladstone, with keen appreciation of the peculiar personal circumstances of the case, described it as "a speech dear and refreshing to a father's heart." If the father in question had happened to be engaged, at whatever point of eminence, in some other walk of life—say, science, art, or literature—it would have been well for the new member, complimented by this high authority, and cheered by the general good-will displayed towards him by a crowded House.

The speech was in every way excellent. Mr. Austen Chamberlain has a good presence, a recommendation which Lord John Russell managed to dispense with, but which is nevertheless desirable. He has a pleasant voice, excellent delivery, and really had something to say. But close by him as he spoke sat his father, and what critics said was, not that the young member for East Worcestershire had made a notable maiden speech, but that his voice was singularly like his father's, the manner of speech almost identical, and that he much resembled him in face, only that he was perhaps better looking—this last being the solitary approval personal to the débutant that was forthcoming. Worse than all, as indicating the hopelessness of the situation, it was more than hinted that the best things which sparkled in the speech were contributions from the paternal store. The voice might be the voice of Austen ; the polished antitheses, the piercing darts, the weighty arguments, were from the armoury of Joseph.

This is scarcely any the less unimportant because it does not happen to be true. Mr. Austen Chamberlain's speech, like the grace of its delivery, was his own ; but that

is of no matter if the House of Commons insists upon thinking otherwise. "Why drag in Velasquez?" Mr. James Whistler asked, when a gushing lady insisted upon telling him that he and Velasquez were the greatest painters of this or any age. "Why drag in my father?" the member in the position of capable young men like Mr. Herbert Gladstone and Mr. Austen Chamberlain may reasonably ask. But the protest will be in vain, and the dragging-in process will instinctively and inevitably follow whenever they chance to take prominent part in the proceedings of the House.



FATHER AND SON.

CHAPTER VIII

AUGUST

ONE of the most interesting books of the forthcoming season will be the *Life of W. H. Smith*, a work undertaken by his friend and colleague, Sir Herbert Maxwell. Sir Herbert, who combines the qualities of an excellent Whip with those that go to make up a successful literary man, will doubtless have found himself hampered in his task by the exceptional goodness of the subject of his memoir. I suppose the most depressing work of biography still in print is that which many years ago had considerable vogue under the title *The Dairyman's Daughter*. Mr. Disraeli, a keen judge of public taste, desiring at one time to say something pungently deprecatory of Mr. Gladstone, observed that he had no pleasant vices. Mr. Smith more fully and accurately came within this category. It will be impossible even for so attractive a writer as Sir Herbert Maxwell to make his biography as interesting as, for example, that of Becky Sharp.

"Old Morality."

Mr. Smith was, in truth, monotonously good. Yet what was meant to be a placid life had its stream unexpectedly turned into turbulent courses. Prosperity made him acquainted with some notable work-fellows, and led him to take a part in making the history of England. It was a strange fate that drew this modest, retiring, gentle-minded bourgeois citizen into being a colleague, first of Mr. Disraeli, last the very pivot of an Admini-

stration which had the Marquis of Salisbury for its motive power.

I remember more than a dozen years ago, crossing Palace Yard, seeing Lord Salisbury and Mr. W. H. Smith enter the precincts of the House by the archway leading to the Ladies' Gallery. Mr. Smith had at that time, doubtless to his own modest surprise, been nominated First Lord of the Admiralty, the first of a series of uses made of him whenever the Government were in difficulty. "When in doubt play trumps" is a time-honoured maxim, the wisdom of

LORD SALISBURY AND MR. W. H. SMITH.

which some players are inclined to dispute. "When in difficulties play W. H. Smith" was a game Mr. Disraeli first led, and was followed up to the last by Lord Salisbury with unfailing success. It was doubtless a mere accident, but I noticed that Lord Salisbury strode along silent, taking no notice of his companion, who walked just half a pace behind him, as if feeling that he had no right to intrude on the meditation, or even the company, of the great patrician by whose side in the Cabinet an inscrutable Providence had led him to take his seat.

This is a trivial incident which only riotous fancy could invest with significance. It often came back to my mind

watching Mr. Smith steadily yet surely marching to the first place in the aristocratic Cabinet, progress involuntarily made, impelled not more by sheer capacity than by force of simple, honest, upright character. In course of time it came to pass that the Cabinet of Lord Salisbury could have better withstood the shock of the Premier's withdrawal than of the resignation of plain Mr. Smith.

Though the study of such a character is apparently lacking in dramatic incident, what may be done with it by competent hands has been triumphantly proved in another branch of literature. Mrs. Walford has made a charming and touching sketch, which not only in many respects recalls the sterling qualities of "Old Morality," but, by a strange coincidence, bore his surname. *Mr. Smith: a Part of his Life* was published long before the member for Westminster came to think he might succeed Pitt, Wellington, and Palmerston in the Lord Wardenship of the Cinque Ports. Yet if Mrs. Walford had used him as a model she could not have come to a closer or more striking appreciation of the subject. Naturally enough, she never dreamed of placing her Mr. Smith in the turmoil of political life, surrounding him more appropriately with the placidity of village life. But in respect of simplicity of character, sterling capacity, generous mind, and unfailing loving-kindness, her Mr. Smith and ours of the House of Commons are identical. The coincidence is completed by the fact that both unexpectedly died just at the time when every one had discovered how good they were, and when the highest aim of their desire was within their reach.

There is one episode in the life of this good man in which his biographer will find the element of tragedy the more striking when found ruffling the serenity of the commonplace. Those most intimate with Mr. Smith firmly believe that had he been less resolute to do his duty to his Queen and country he would have been alive at this day, a placid pillar of strength to his party in the House of Lords. He died at the post of duty, with a heroism that need not shrink from comparison with the most brilliant deeds

recorded in the annals of war by sea or land. He had meant to retire at the close of the Session of 1889, when the wearying illness that finally wore him away was beginning to sap his strength. At that time the Salisbury Government were already amid the breakers. The House of Commons was growing restive; the Ministerialists were disheartened; the Opposition growing in strength and audacity. Not only was Mr. Smith the only man who could be counted upon to ride upon the gathering storm, but his withdrawal from the scene would have led to extremely inconvenient competition for the vacant post of Leader of the House of Commons.

"AT THE POST OF DUTY."

So he stayed on, suffering and patient, making his little jokes, declaiming his cherished copybook headings, sometimes genially laughed at, always trusted, managing the peculiarly difficult business of the Leadership with an art the consummation of which was its perfect concealment—perhaps even from himself. The last time he appeared in the House was on a sultry afternoon in July. Members around him were gay in summer garb.

"THE LAST TIME."

He had brought with him his carriage rug, and as he sat on the Treasury Bench he tucked it round his knees, remaining there through the sitting with haggard eyes, pale face, still bravely smiling.

"A pitcher that goes often to the well will be broken at last," was a little tag he characteristically used about this time when one of his colleagues cheerily remarked that he was looking better, and would be all right again after the recess.

He was never more seen in the House of Commons, though this was not his last appearance in public. The final journeying forth of the pitcher, the occasion when it, doubtless, received the final fracture, was on Monday, 13th July 1890. The Shah was on a visit to London, and this day was fixed for a reception at Hatfield. All the world were bidden to the festivities, which culminated in a great luncheon party on the Monday. Mr. Smith was one of the house party, arriving on the Saturday. He would have been much better in his bed, but the occasion was important, and if he could only crawl along the path of duty, he would go. One of his fellow-guests, a colleague in the Cabinet, tells me of his appearance at the dinner on Sunday night. As he sat at the table he was evidently in acute pain.

"We could see death written on his face," said his colleague.

But he talked and smiled and made believe that nothing was the matter. He was induced to withdraw as soon as the ladies left the dining-room. So acute was his agony, his ancient trouble having developed in an attack of gout in the stomach, that he could not go to bed, passing a sleepless night in a chair. But there was the luncheon next day, with the big company down from London, a fresh call of duty which he obeyed. He sat through the meal, and gallantly went home to die.

The end came at Walmer, after three months' additional suffering, borne with unfailing courage and patience. He was always sanguine that on the morrow he would be able to go out for a cruise in his beloved *Pandora*, lying at

anchor just off the battlements of the castle waiting for the master. It seemed quite a natural and appropriate thing that on the very day the newspapers contained the announcement of his death, news came of the tragic end of Mr. Parnell, and as newspaper space is strictly limited, and the British public can give their minds to only one excitement at a time, there was hardly room to do justice to the quietly noble life just closed at Walmer.

Petitions.

Colonel Kenyon is not, except by chance, and unconsciously, a humorist. But there was one day in the Session when he flashed upon the pleased House a gleam of genuine humour. Being charged with the presentation of a number of petitions against the Welsh Suspensory Bill, he borrowed from the Library a huge waste-paper basket, stuffed the bundles of circulars therein, and, marching round the table in full view of a crowded House, deposited them in the sack which hangs at the corner of the table by the Clerk's seat.

"PREMATURE."

This was premature, and, in the circumstances, sardonic. Colonel Kenyon being in charge of the petitions might, but for the unaccustomed temptation of humour, have let them go along the ordinary course to oblivion. All petitions presented to the House of Commons are predestined for the waste-paper basket. Colonel Kenyon, with a promptitude learned in tented fields on which forty centuries looked down, scorned circumlocutory habits, and put the petitions in the waste-paper basket to begin with.

The right of petitioning the House of Commons is ancient, and at one time may have had some significance, even importance. It must have been prior to the time of

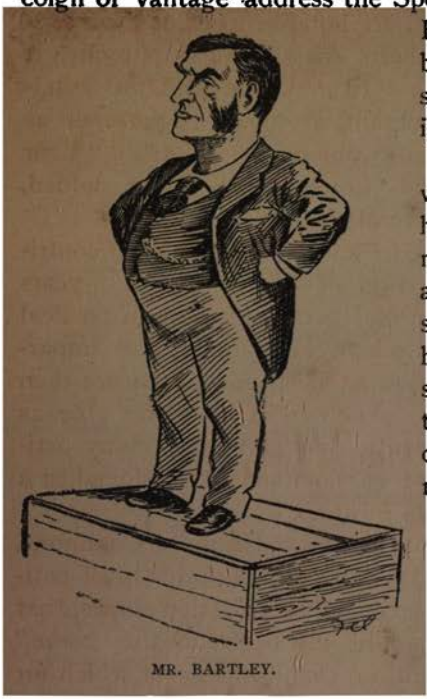
Dr. Johnson, that shrewd observer having in the hearing of Mr. Boswell gone to the root of the matter.

"This petitioning," he genially observed when the subject cropped up in conversation, "is a new mode of distressing Government, and a mighty easy one. I will undertake to get petitions either against quarter-guineas or half-guineas with the help of a little hot wine."

This Session, concurrent with the introduction of a hotly contested measure such as the Home Rule Bill, there has been a notable recrudescence of petitions. It is true nothing in the way of petition-presenting has equalled the famous scene in the Session of 1890, when "the Trade" demonstrated against an attack by the Chancellor of the Exchequer upon their preserves. On that occasion the floor of the House, from within the Bar to the shadow of the Mace, was packed with gigantic wooden frames, containing massive cylinders reported to enshrine the signatures of 600,000 citizens anxious that the poor man should not have his noggin of neat spirits enhanced in price. It turned out upon inquiry, hotly made, that the Speaker, having been approached on the subject, had given his consent to the petitions being brought in. But, as he apologetically observed, he had not taken into account the wooden cases. These, towering full six feet high, entirely obscured the view between the two sides of the House.

Mr. Bartley was, by chance, making a few preliminary observations, and one at this day remembers with pleasure the keen solicitude displayed by the Radicals that the hon. member should not be embarrassed, and that they should have opportunity not only of hearing his remarks, but of benefiting by full view of the orator whilst they were delivered. They stood up in their places craning their necks so that they might catch a glimpse of him, over what one irreverently alluded to as "these vats." Suggestion was made that he should cross the gangway and continue his observations from the Treasury Bench. Mr. Labouchere bettered this by proposing, in softest voice and most winning manner, that the member for North Islington

might scramble on to the top of the cases, and from that coign of vantage address the Speaker. In the end, the six House messengers who had brought in the cases were summoned, and the things ignominiously removed.


MR. BARTLEY.

That demonstration, which must have cost much hot wine, was not so successful as to induce repetition on similar lines. But petitions have, through the Session, still flowed in, and have, from time to time, been made the occasion for objurgatory remarks. Just after the House

What becomes of Petitions.

MR. DALZIEL.

resumed at the close of the Easter holidays, the subject came up in piquant fashion with intent to show how vastly petitions against the Home Rule Bill preponderated. The Chairman of the Petitions Committee was asked to state the number of petitions for and against the Bill. He set forth statistics which demonstrated the overwhelming activity in this field of the opponents of the measure. When the cheers this statement elicited subsided, Mr. Dalziel interposed, and read a letter which

would have interested Dr. Johnson had he been privileged to peruse it. Written by the secretary of a Conservative Association, it was addressed to hotel-keepers at places of popular resort on the southern coast. Accompanying it were printed petitions against Home Rule, and the hotel-keepers were begged to obtain as many signatures as possible, "whether by man, woman, or child." "Your Easter visitors," the shrewd Conservative agent added, "should be able to fill up several sheets."

To a conversation which followed, Mr. McLagan contributed an interesting recollection of how a couple of years ago the Petition Committee had been called upon to deal with a case where a whole school of children had impartially signed a petition for (or against) some measure then engrossing public attention. Another member was able, as the result of his own investigation, to state that many petitions presented to the House of Commons were signed in a good flowing hand by infants in arms.

These facts, familiar enough in the House of Commons, would seem to suffice to put a stop to the industry of petitioning. But, as the experience of the Session shows, that anticipation is not realised. The cry is, "Still they come," and the labours of the Petition Committee, over which for many years the late Sir Charles Forster presided, are as exacting as ever. It must, I suppose, be to some one's interest and advantage to keep the thing going. In what direction the interest lies is indicated in the statement, more than once made in conversation on the subject in the House, that the labour of obtaining signatures is remunerated at the rate of so much per hundred.

That, with the rarest exceptions, petitions presented to the House of Commons have not the slightest effect upon its deliberations is an affirmation that may be made with confidence. One of the exceptions is to be found in the popular movement that demanded the Reform Bill. But that was sixty years ago, a time when the public voice had not such full opportunities of expression as are found to-day in the Press and on the platform.

What happens in the majority of cases is, that a petition being forwarded to a member, he quietly drops it in the sack at the corner of the table. When the sack is full it is carried out to one of the Committee-rooms, and entry is made of the place whence each petition comes, of the number of signatures, and of the name of the Bill for or against which it is launched. The clerks attached to the Committee on Petitions subsequently glance over the list of names, and if there is anything in the array glaringly suggestive of irregularity, the Committee have their attention called to it, and occasionally think it worth while to bring the matter under the notice of the House with intent to have somebody punished. Otherwise the document unobtrusively proceeds on its way to the paper mill, the House of Commons all unconscious of its existence.

"CARRIED OUT."

The most striking feature in the Session has been the position achieved by Mr. Chamberlain. Nothing seen in his travels by Baron Munchausen, nothing recorded in the adventures of *Alice in Wonderland*, exceeds this marvel. Mr. Balfour has been the titular Leader of the Opposition; Mr. Chamberlain has ordered the plan of campaign, and has led in person all the principal attacks on the enemy's entrenchment. Mr. Balfour has reigned; Mr. Chamberlain has governed.

Mr. Chamberlain.

Here is where the marvel comes in. It is no unusual thing for a prominent member of a party to break away from his colleagues in the Leadership and set up in business for himself. But he invariably opens his shop on the same

side of the street. Mr. Chamberlain has gone over the way bag and baggage, has been received into the inner councils of his ancient adversary, and, being there, rules the roost. There was a time within recent memory when he was of all public men the most detested in Conservative circles. In this respect he succeeded to the heritage of his friend and colleague, Mr. Bright. Mr. Gladstone they distrusted and detested. Mr. Chamberlain they loathed and feared.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN.

The scenes that took place in the House of Commons in connection with the Aston Park riots forcibly illustrate Mr. Chamberlain's position this time eight years ago in view of the Conservative party. He for his part joyously accepted the situation, hitting back swinging blows at the House of Lords that has "always been the obsequious handmaid of the Tory party," and at the larger body of Conservatives in the Commons and the country, the "men whom we have fought and worsted in a hundred fights, men who borrow our watchwords, hoist our colours, steal our arms, and seek to occupy our position." That the relentless foeman of 1870-85 should be to-day the foremost ally, the most prized captain of the host he then fought, seems to be a phantasy of nightmare.

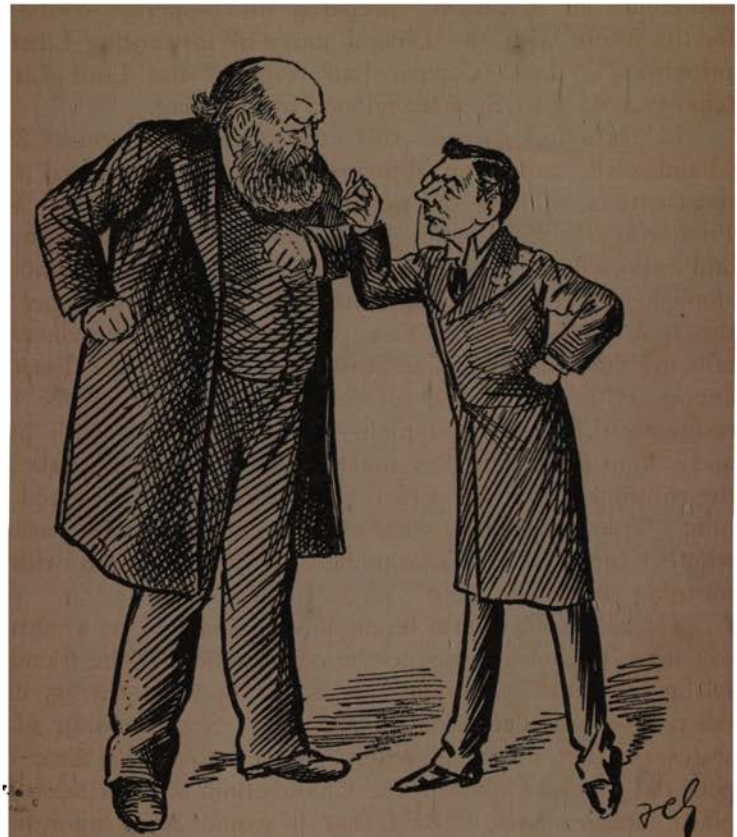
> Who but must laugh, if such a man there be;
> Who would not weep, if Atticus were he?

How the miracle was wrought is a story that will doubtless some day be written large. Pending authoritative chronicle, there are not lacking those who trace the whole story back to troublous days in May 1882. At that time Mr. Forster, long at issue with some of his colleagues

in the Cabinet, resigned the office of Chief Secretary. A new pathway had been selected by the Government in their relations with Ireland. Coercion had been tried and had failed. Kilmainham Treaty had been signed. Mr. Parnell had come out of prison "prepared to co-operate cordially for the future with the Liberal party in forwarding Liberal principles." Lord Cowper had resigned the Lord Lieutenancy, and Earl Spencer reigned in his stead.

In bringing about this transformation scene Mr. Chamberlain had been principally active. It seemed the most natural thing in the world that he should succeed Mr. Forster at Dublin Castle. That he was prepared to do so and expected the appointment were matters certainly understood in the House of Commons at the time. A member of the Irish party, then as now predominant in its councils, tells me that on the 4th of May 1882 (the day Mr. Forster announced in the House of Commons the reasons for his resignation), Mr. Chamberlain had an interview with him and sought his counsel as to the course he should take in the contingency of the Chief Secretaryship being offered to him. This gentleman, with characteristic bluntness, asked whether the offer had been made. Mr. Chamberlain, with a meaning smile, said "No."

That the offer would be made was assumed, as a matter of course, by both parties to the conversation. The friendly Irishman, whilst welcoming, as all his political friends did, the prospect of accession to the Chief Secretaryship of a statesman then above all others pledged to Home Rule, on personal grounds advised Mr. Chamberlain not to take the office, foreseeing, as he said, that it would bring upon him incessant trouble and possibly political ruin. On the next day, Friday, the 5th of May, the writ for a new election for the West Riding was moved consequent on the acceptance by Lord Frederick Cavendish of the post of Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant. The Irish member whom I am quoting added the amazing and, save on such authority, the incredible statement that the first intimation of this arrangement Mr. Chamberlain received was when,



"BLOWS AT THE HOUSE OF LORDS."

from his place on the Treasury Bench, he heard the writ moved.

If this story is true—and if I were at liberty to mention the authority it would be accepted as unimpeachable—it does much to explain, if not to excuse, Mr. Chamberlain's subsequent action, and the attitude of relentless animosity thereafter exhibited towards Mr. Gladstone.

The long fight in the Commons over the Home Rule Bill has been rather a duel than a pitched battle. Night after night the forces were marshalled on either side; firing was incessantly kept up; brigades engaged; now and then, from other quarters than the Treasury Bench and the corner seat of the third bench below the gangway, a speech was made that attracted attention. For the most part it was dull mechanical pounding, varied by a personal contest between Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain. The House was invariably crowded when Mr. Chamberlain spoke. For him the audience was centred in the one figure on the Treasury Bench. Mr. Gladstone, when he spoke, habitually turned round to face the corner seat below the gangway, and personally addressed his "right hon. friend."

The Duello.

"ONE OF HIS RIGHT HON. FRIENDS."

It was jarring throughout to hear the use of this phrase bandied across the gangway. Mr. Gladstone used it sparingly. Mr. Chamberlain interlarded his speech with it, investing the simple phrase with many shades of meaning, none particularly friendly. Once Mr. Gladstone, contrary to his habitude, moved to a personal jibe, audibly interposed with the remark, "Which 'right hon. friend'?

The right hon. gentleman has so many right hon. friends."

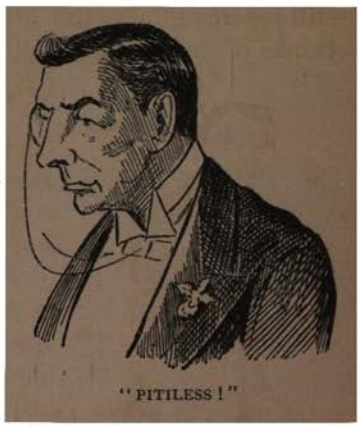
That hint would have been taken by sensitive people. Mr. Chamberlain is not inclined to forgo one of his advantages. He has never quarrelled with Mr. Gladstone. He still reveres him as the greatest statesman of our time, still thinks of him in connection with a lofty mountain, whose magnitude we do not appreciate whilst we are still close to it. But Mr. Gladstone has gone wrong on the Home Rule Question, as, in quite another sense, he was wrong in the spring of 1882. Mr. Chamberlain, giving the first place to the interests of his country and sternly loyal to a sense of duty, has found himself leading the Conservative party against his former chief. But it is only the political leader from whom he has parted. He still retains the "right hon. friend."

"THE RIGHT HON. FRIEND."

There was a time when it seemed that Mr. Chamberlain, in stepping outside the pale of the Liberal party, had voluntarily suffered political ostracism. It was a view in which to a certain extent he appeared to acquiesce. For a considerable period approaching the term of the last Parliament he was content to take a back seat in politics. Occasionally he appeared at a public meeting in the country. In the House of Commons he was not often seen, still more rarely heard. He came down for questions, went off in good time for dinner, and appeared no more through the sitting. If a division were pending, or any interesting speech expected, he broke through the rule, coming down in evening dress, dined and debonair.

It is apparently a small matter, really of profound signi-

ficance, that, during the present Session, Mr. Chamberlain, whilst in nightly attendance, has not half a dozen times donned dinner dress. He must needs dine; but he performs the incidental duty as the Israelites fed at Passover time, with loins girded and staff in hand. He has been the backbone of the opposition to the Home Rule Bill, tireless, unfaltering, ruthless. It is probable that but for him the Conservative gentry, weary of the monotony of constant attendance and incessant divisions, would have retired from the fight, content to leave the final destruction of the Bill to the House of Lords. Mr. Chamberlain has been pitiless. No point has been too minute for his criticism, none too large for his virile grasp. Through it all he has never swerved from the urbane, deferential manner with which he has turned to discuss successive points with his "right hon. friend" on the Treasury Bench.



"PITILESS!"

Now and then a quick ear might detect metallic notes in the ordinarily soft voice, or a watchful eye might observe a gesture that mocked the friendly phrase and the almost reverential attitude. These were idle fancies, possibly born of meditation on what may never have taken place in those far-off May days, when Mr. Forster was fighting forlornly at his last outpost.

More about a premature Report.

M.P. writes: As I read *The Strand Magazine* month by month through the Session I come to the conclusion that you must have either a marvellous memory or a priceless note-book. I remember very well O'Connor Power's prematurely reported speech in the House of Commons, but thought others had forgotten it. It was published, not, as you suggest, in a local paper, but in *Freeman's Journal*, then in the plenitude of its power

and the full tide of its circulation. May I add to the details you give that the speech, evidently elaborately prepared, finished up by way of peroration with the not unfamiliar lines from Tennyson about "Freedom broadening slowly down from precedent to precedent"? In the too previous report it was stated that this passage was received with "enthusiastic cheering."

O'Connor Power actually got off the speech on the following night. As, at the hour when he caught the Speaker's eye, no copy of *Freeman's Journal* had reached London, he was presumably safe from immediate consequences of the accident. But some of his compatriots, learning by telegraph what had happened, gave him away, and when he arose to deliver the cherished oration, he was met by hilarious cries of "Spoke! Spoke!"

CHAPTER IX

SEPTEMBER

IN the closing weeks of the Session the House of Lords enjoyed the unaccustomed privilege of knowing that the eyes of the country were fixed upon it. At length, for a strictly limited time, the Lords have cut out the Commons. The period during which they have had the Home Rule Bill in charge has been brief compared with the long stretch of time they were as entirely ignored as if their existence had terminated. For weeks and months through the Session the House of Lords might easily, and more conveniently, have fulfilled all its legislative functions if it had met on the Monday and made holiday through the rest of the week.

The House of Lords.

For the large majority of noble lords, whether the House is sitting or not is a matter of small consequence. If they have time and inclination they may look in on the way to the Park or Club, or they may forbear. They have no responsibilities to meet, no constituencies jealously counting the number of divisions from which they are absent. Indeed, there are very few divisions to take part in. When such an event occurs the House of Lords is inclined, as Mr. Disraeli once irreverently wrote, to cackle with content as a hen that has laid an egg. Still, there are the Lord Chancellor, the Ministers, and one or two ex-Ministers, not to mention the exhausted officials, who must needs be in their places if a sitting be appointed, and who would welcome an arrange-

ment that would relieve them from an engagement that has not the value of utility to recommend it. Often it has come to pass that the Lord Chancellor in wig and gown, accompanied by Purse-bearer and Mace, with Black Rod on guard at the Bar, has marched to the Woolsack, and having advanced a group of private Bills a formal stage, has marched back again, and so the House was "up."

LORD HERSCHELL.

It would, however, never do to admit by adoption of such arrangement as that suggested that the country could get along without the House of Lords. Therefore it will sit, though it has no work to do. A few years ago, when things were particularly dull, it suddenly resolved that it would meet an hour earlier than heretofore, so as to be the better able to grapple with accumulation of work. Lord Sherbrooke, a new recruit to the Chamber, was so tickled with this that he dropped into verse—

> As long as their lordships assembled at five,
> They found they had nothing to keep them alive;
> By wasting more time they expect to do more,
> So determine to meet at a quarter-past four.

It was explained at the time that the new arrangement was made with a view to giving an opportunity to the younger peers to take part in debate. It is only in rare circumstances that noble lords will sacrifice their dinner on the altar of the State. It ordinarily requires a cry of either the Church or the Land in danger to keep them sitting after

eight o'clock. Complaint was made that, meeting at five o'clock, nearly the whole of the time up to the adjournment was occupied by the front benches, or the Duke of Argyll. It was said if the House met an hour earlier young fellows like Lord Denman might have the chance of showing what mettle they are made of. No notable change has been wrought in that direction consequent upon the new departure. Noble lords accustomed to speak before speak now with fuller frequency and more certain regularity. Failing that, their lordships get off to dinner an hour earlier.

LORD DENMAN.

There are many reasons why the House of Lords is not a successful school of oratory.

A House of Commons' Secret.

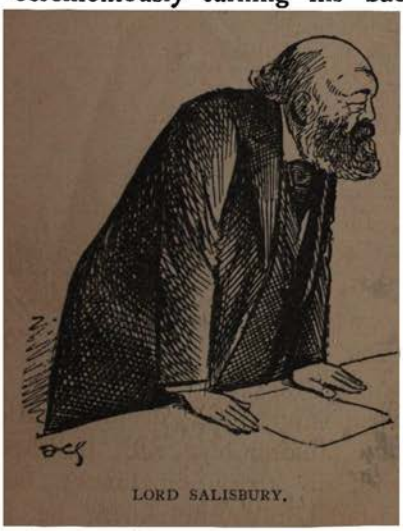
The first and not least important is that it is an exceedingly difficult place in which to make oneself heard. When the new Houses of Parliament were opened, the Peers' Chamber was found to have in this respect a rival in the House of Commons. In the Commons then, as in the Lords now, the average human voice lost itself amidst the immensities of the roof. The Lords continue to suffer the inconvenience of lack of acoustical properties in their Chamber. In the Commons, where business really must be done, and is conducted *vivâ voce*, it was necessary to have a Chamber in which one man could hear another speak. After many devices and experiments the roof was lowered by a contrivance of glass, which served a double debt to pay. Through these sheets of glass falls the brilliant light that illumines the House of Commons, whilst it encloses a space by which the plan of ventilation is made practicable.

Few members looking up at the glass ceiling, the unique and now most familiar adjunct of the House of Commons,

are aware that it is an after-thought, and that it conceals a roof not less lofty or ornate than that in the House of Lords. The result has been to make the House of Commons one of the most perfect Chambers in the world for public speaking, the House of Lords remaining one of the worst.

Peers who make themselves heard.

Whilst for the average member the House of Lords is a sepulchre of speech, it is a curious fact that, as far as I know without exception, every man whom the House and the country desire to hear makes himself audible even in the Lords. When Mr. Disraeli left the Commons, there was much curiosity to learn whether Lord Beaconsfield could make himself heard amid his new surroundings. He succeeded, apparently, without an effort, being heard in the Lords quite as well as he had been accustomed to make himself audible in the Commons. Earl Granville was heard in the Press Gallery, but only by dint of patient and painstaking endeavour. He literally "spoke to the Gallery," more especially when, as a Minister, he had anything important to communicate. At such times, unceremoniously turning his back on the Lord Chancellor seated on the Woolsack, he faced the Press Gallery and spoke up to it.



LORD SALISBURY.

Lord Salisbury, with more sonorous voice, to this day observes the same attitude, standing sideways at the table and addressing the Gallery. This is his habit when making ordered speech. When he flings across the House some barbed arrow of wit, he leans both hands on the table, and personally addresses the peer who is, for the time, his target. Even then, happily, he is heard, and the strangers in the Gallery may share the delight of the

peers at the brilliant coruscations that play across the table. When Lord Granville was still alive there was nothing more delightful than the occasional encounters between himself and Lord Salisbury. The Conservative Chief has plainly suffered by the withdrawal of this incentive to playful sarcasm. Lord Kimberley, with many admirable qualities, is not the kind of man to inspire liveliness in a political opponent. Compared with the effect noticeable in the case of Lord Granville, the Earl of Kimberley in his influence upon Lord Salisbury acts the part of a wet blanket.

Happily Lord Granville has left behind him an inheritor of much of his personal and oratorical charm, one, moreover, who has an equally happy effect in influencing Lord Salisbury. If the House of Lords were the House of Commons, and circumstances analogous to those taking place within the last two years had followed, Lord Rosebery would, as a matter of course, have stepped into the shoes of Lord Granville. But the ways of the House of Lords are peculiarly its own; and Lord Kimberley leads it.

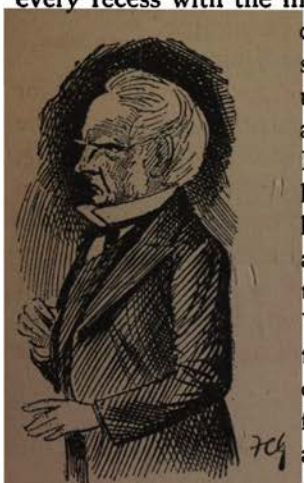
Lord Rosebery.

LORD KIMBERLEY.

Lord Rosebery's style, whether in the House or in after-dinner speech, is closely akin to Lord Granville's in respect of grace and delicacy of touch. Where difference is marked is possibly found in the particulars that Lord Granville's style was the more polished and Lord Rosebery's is the more vigorous. Lord Granville played around the victim of his gentle humour, almost apologetically pinking him with polished rapier. Lord Rosebery will do that sometimes; but occasionally, as the late Lord Brabourne knew, he is capable of delivering a blow straight from the shoulder on the visage of a deserving object. His oratorical style may

be described as English, benefiting by application of French polish. Lord Granville's was French, with substratum of what we are pleased to regard as British solidity.

Lord Rosebery is one of the few peers who make light of the ordinarily fatal effects of the gilded chamber. He apparently makes no particular effort, but manages to fill every recess with the music of his voice. So does the Duke of Argyll, but he is not without suspicion of uplifting his voice in unaristocratic shout. This is probably due to the fact that the MacCallum More, having all his life lived in association with the bagpipes, has unconsciously caught the attitude, and is apparently under sore temptation to take the strut of the player. When he addresses the Lords he throws back his head, inflates his chest, and slightly extends his right foot, an attitude that only wants the accessory of the bagpipes to make it completely national.



DUKE OF ARGYLL.

The late Lord Chancellor and the present occupant of the Woolsack have, in common, the advantage of making themselves heard in the House. As for Lord Bramwell, he has a voice that would be heard in a storm at sea. Lord Ashbourne, who used to be thought a little loud-voiced for the delicate arrangement of the House of Commons, is quite at home in the House of Lords. The Marquis of Waterford is another peer who under peculiar circumstances may be listened to without painful effort. Owing to an accident in the hunting field the Marquis is disabled from standing, and has special permission to address the House seated. This he does with surprising vigour alike of voice and invective. Lord Dudley, one of the youngest peers, has excellent voice and delivery, the more fortunate in his case as he generally has something to say worth listening to. Lord Winchilsea and

Nottingham is still another peer who commands the ear of the House.

There are probably other peers who possess natural gifts that cope with the difficulty that handicaps genius in the Lords; but no other names occur to me.

The general run of oratorical effort may be illustrated by two incidents that happened during the Session. One night in June Lord Breadalbane, wearing the uniform of the Lord Steward, and carrying the wand of office, appeared at the table and stood there for some moments. As the House sat attentive it began to be suspected in the Press Gallery that he was saying something, in all probability reading a reply from the Queen to an address presented by the House. What it might be was not conveyed by any audible sentence. It was necessary to have some record in the report, and a message was sent down to the Clerk of the Table asking if he could inform the reporters what was the nature of the Lord Steward's business. The Clerk sent back word that he was always anxious to oblige, but the lamentable fact was that though Lord Breadalbane had been standing at the table at which he sat, he had not heard a word of his message.

Dumb Show.

LORD HALSBURY.

That was possibly a calamity arising out of the natural modesty of an ingenuous young peer suddenly finding himself thrust into a position of prominence. The other case more precisely illustrates the chronic difficulty hinted at. In the course of a long debate in Committee on the Places of Worship (Sites) Bill, Lord Grimthorpe, standing on his legs for ten minutes, was understood to be moving an amendment.

Lord Belper, in charge of the Bill, opposed the amendment in a speech almost as inaudible. Lord Halsbury, whose observations at least have the merit of being audible, protested that Lord Belper had not properly appreciated the arguments of Lord Grimthorpe. "I could not hear him," said Lord Belper. "I must confess, my lords," said the ex-Lord Chancellor, with his winning smile, "that I am not certain I myself correctly caught the drift of Lord Belper's remarks."

Happily for the welfare of the nation, this physical inability to follow the arguments of a debate does not preclude noble lords from giving their opinion thereupon by their vote in the Lobby.

One result of the change in the hour of meeting sung by Lord Sherbrooke has been the abandonment of a practice which led to occasional explosions. When the House of Lords began to meet at a quarter-past four, the House of Commons at that time not commencing public business till half-past four, it was possible, with an effort at agility, for Black Rod to reach the Commons, and summon them to a Royal Commission before questions had commenced. When the House of Commons advanced its time of meeting by an hour Black Rod inevitably arrived, in discharge of his mission, at a time when questions were in full swing.

Black Rod.

It is a reminder of old times that Black Rod, coming about the Sovereign's business, brooks no delay. It is true that when watchful scouts in the Commons' Lobby breathlessly bring news that "Black Rod's a-coming," the doorkeeper leaves his chair, darts within the open doors, shuts and bolts them, and calmly awaits the consequences. Black Rod, coming up and finding the door thus unceremoniously closed in his face, raps upon it thrice with his stick. The doorkeeper, cautious to the last, instead of unbolting the door, opens a little spy-hole cunningly built above the sturdy lock. With a start of surprise he finds Black Rod standing there, demanding entrance in the name of the Queen. Without more ado he unlocks and unbolts, and, hastening within

the glass door of the House itself, stands at the Bar and at the top of his voice proclaims "Black Rod!"

The inconvenience of this sudden incursion and interruption has been felt for centuries. It might have gone on to the end of time but for the accident that one afternoon the sudden cry "Black Rod!" broke in upon remarks Mr. Gladstone chanced to be making. There was under the ancient rules of the House no option to any one. Black Rod must set forth for the Commons when he receives the word of command from the House of Lords. The doorkeeper, after peeping at him through the spy-hole, must straightway rush into the Commons and bellow "Black Rod!" The gentleman on his feet, be he Premier or private member, must forthwith resume his seat. The course of business is peremptorily interrupted, whilst Mr. Speaker, accompanied by the Mace and one forlorn Minister (usually the Home Secretary), trudges off to the Bar of the Lords to hear the Royal Assent given by Commission to a batch of Bills.

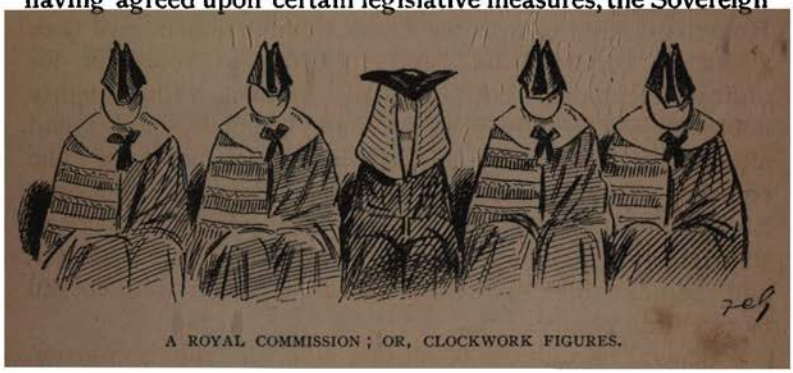
THE SPEAKER'S PROCESSION.

The chance interruption of Mr. Gladstone had the effect upon the procedure which is hopefully looked for in respect of railway management when a director has been maimed in a collision. Angry protests were made by loyal Radicals, and the Speaker undertook to communicate with the authorities in the other House with a view of devising means whereby inconvenience might be averted. The suggestion made to the Lords was that they should so arrange matters

that Black Rod should appear on his picturesque but not particularly practical mission at a time when he would not interrupt the course of public business. An effort was made to carry out this suggestion, but, the hours clashing, it was found impossible. The consequence has been that occasionally a Saturday sitting has been found necessary for the purpose of going through the performance of giving the Royal Assent to Bills.

A Royal Commission.

Whether Parliament might not get rid of the anachronism of the Royal Commission is, I suppose, a question for which the time is not yet ripe. The assumption underlying the Constitution is that Parliament, having agreed upon certain legislative measures, the Sovereign



A ROYAL COMMISSION; OR, CLOCKWORK FIGURES.

carefully considers them, and either gives consent or exercises the right of veto. In the good old days the King took an active part in the weekly, almost the daily, business of the House of Commons. Not only was the Session opened and closed by Majesty in person, but the Royal Assent was given or withheld by the King's own hand. Now, with rare exceptions at the opening of a Session, the functions of the Sovereign are performed by Commissioners, the business degenerating into a formality which may be essential, but is certainly not dignified.

Several times in the course of a Session a Royal Commission sits. It consists of the Lord Chancellor and, usually, four other peers. They are dressed in the ermine-trimmed scarlet robes of a peer of Parliament, and are, as it is

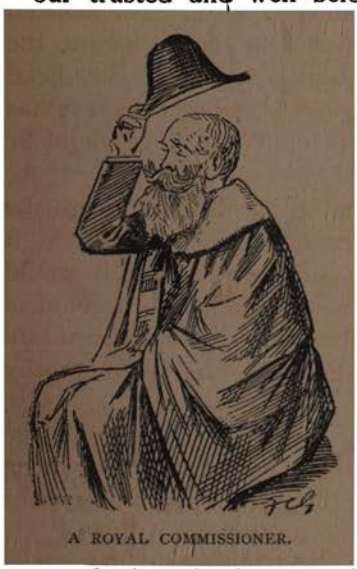
written in police-court reports, "accommodated with a seat" upon a bench set in front of the Woolsack. All being in readiness, Black Rod is bidden to request the appearance at the Bar of the House of the faithful Commons. In the last days of the memorable Parliament of 1874 the delivery of this message raised what threatened to be a grave Constitutional question. General Knollys was Black Rod at the time, and the jealous ear of Sir George Bowyer detected on his part a lapse into unwarranted imperiousness. Black Rod, having gained admittance to the House of Commons, in circumstances already described, approaches the table with measured step, thrice making obeisance to the Chair. Arrived at the table, he should say, "The presence of members of this honourable House is desired to hear the Lords Commissioners give their assent to certain Bills." Whether due to contempt for ordinary humanity born of daily contact with haughty nobles, or whether by pure accident, General Knollys had altered this formula, "requiring" instead of "desiring" the company of the Commons at the Bar of the House of Lords. Sir George Bowyer, a type extinct in the present Parliament, solemnly called the attention of the Speaker to the matter, and the next time Black Rod appeared all ears were cocked to catch his phrase.

General Knollys was at this time an elderly warrior, not too certain on his pins. Beneath his carefully-cultured hauteur he nurtured a great terror of the House of Commons, which used to pretend fiercely to resent his entrances, and ironically cheered his painstaking exit backwards. This was his last mission to the Parliament of 1874. Its turbulent life was measured by a few gasps. When the Speaker obeyed the summons and stood at the Bar of the House of Lords to hear the prorogation read, all would be over. General Knollys might with impunity have flouted the moribund House, and avenged a long series of insults by rasping out the objectionable word "required." A swift retreat and a flight across the Lobby would have landed him in the sanctuary of his box in the House of Lords. The General was, happily, of a generous mind, and, meekly

"desiring" the presence of members in the other House, what might have been an interesting scene passed off quietly.

A Solemn Farce.

When the Speaker, accompanied by the Serjeant-at-Arms bearing the Mace, and escorted by a number of members who rarely exceed a dozen, reaches the Bar of the House of Lords, the five cloaked figures on the bench before the Woolsack thrice uplift their cocked hats. This is designed as a salutation to the Speaker. Simultaneously the Clerk of Parliament, quitting his seat at the end of the table, advances midway adown its length. Halting, he produces a large document bearing many seals. This is the Royal Commission appointing "our trusted and well-beloved councillors" to act for the Sovereign in the matter of signifying Royal Assent to certain Bills. When the Clerk of Parliament comes upon a name in the catalogue of Commissioners, he stops, turns half to the right, and bows low to the red-cloaked figures on the bench. At this signal a hand appears from under the folds of one of the cloaks, and a cocked hat is uplifted. The process is repeated at the recital of each name, till the Royal Commissioners have been numbered off.



A ROYAL COMMISSIONER.

This formality completed, another clerk in wig and gown steps forth and takes a position on the left-hand side of the table facing the Lords Commissioners. He is known as the Clerk of the Crown, and it is his mission vocally to signify the Royal Assent. At this stage the performance becomes irresistibly comic. On the table by the Clerk of Parliament is a pile of documents. These are the Bills which have passed both Houses and now await the Royal Assent.

Taking one in his hand, the clerk on the right-hand side of the table turns to face the cloaked figures, to whom he bows low. The clerk on the left-hand side of the table simultaneously performs a similar gesture. The two clerks then wheel about till they face each other across the table. The Clerk of Parliament reads the title of the Bill, the Clerk of the Crown responding, in sepulchral voice, "*La Reyne le veult.*" Both clerks wheel round to face the Lords Commissioners, to whom they again make a profound bow. Then they face about, the Clerk of Parliament takes up another document, reads out a fresh title, and the Clerk of the Crown, with deepening sadness as the moments pass, chants his melancholy refrain, "*La Reyne le veult.*"

Nothing more is said or done till the batch of Bills is exhausted and the clerks return to their seats. The cloaked figures on the Woolsack then raise their cocked hats to the Speaker standing at the Bar, who gravely inclines his head and gets back to the work-a-day world, whose business has been interrupted in order that this lugubrious farce might be accomplished.

There is no harm in this, and as the Lords through the greater part of the Session have not much else to do, it would be unkind to make an end of it. But it would appear that it is scarcely the sort of thing on account of which the serious business of the nation, going forward in the House of Commons, should be rudely and peremptorily interrupted.

A Dire Dilemma.

During a Session that has almost exclusively been given up to debate on the Home Rule Bill, the House of Commons has fully justified its reputation as the most entertaining theatre within the Metropolitan area. Amid a long series of exciting scenes and swift surprises, nothing exceeds in dramatic quality the episode when Mr. John Dillon "remembered Mitchelstown" nine months and four days before that historic event had happened. It was Mr. Chamberlain who played up to this scene, as he was personally responsible for many

others that stirred the passions of the House to their deepest depths.

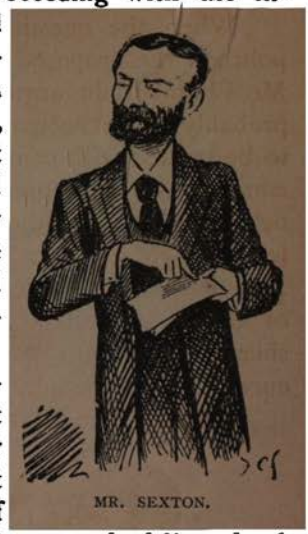
When the question of transferring the control of the police to the proposed Irish Legislature was under discussion, Mr. Chamberlain argued that the body of men who would probably form the majority in the new Legislature were not to be trusted with control of the liberty and property of the community. In support of this contention he cited a speech delivered by Mr. Dillon at Castlerea, in which the member for East Mayo was reported to have said that when the Irish Parliament was constituted they would have the control of things in Ireland, and "would remember" the police, sheriffs, the bailiffs, and others who had shown themselves enemies of the people.

This effective attack was made in a crowded and excited House, that awaited with interest Mr. Dillon's rejoinder. It was made in immediately effective style. Mr. Dillon did not defend the threat cited, but urged that it had been uttered in circumstances of cruel provocation. A short time earlier the massacre at Mitchelstown had taken place. He had seen three innocent men shot down by the police in cold blood. "That recollection," he emphatically said, "was hot in my mind when I spoke at Castlerea."

THE SCRAP OF PAPER.

For ten minutes longer Mr. Dillon went on. At the end of that time the House observed that Mr. Sexton, who sat next to his colleague, handed him a scrap of paper. That is by no means an unusual occurrence in debate in the House of Commons. A member having a case to state or reply to forgets a detail and has it brought to

his mind by watchful friends. Mr. Dillon took the paper and closely read it, still slowly proceeding with the incompleted sentence on which he had embarked when the interruption presented itself. Members listened with quickened attention to what followed, curious to know what was the point overlooked, and now to be introduced into the speech. It was not readily discernible in the conclusion of the speech, which Mr. Dillon accomplished without sign of hesitation or perturbation.


MR. SEXTON.

The Scrap of Paper.

Yet the scrap of paper, unflinchingly read, conveyed one of the most terrible messages ever received by a prominent public man addressing the House of Commons. On it was written: "*Your speech delivered 5th December* 1886. *Mitchelstown affair 9th September* 1887."

Mr. Dillon had suffered one of the most curious and, in the circumstances, most damaging lapses of memory that ever afflicted a man in the House of Commons. An English member might have done it with comparative impunity. It would have seemed strange and would, for a long time, have been hurtful to his reputation for accuracy. At least, his *bona-fides* would have remained unchallenged. There would have been no accusation of attempting to "palm off" a false statement on an unsuspicious House. With John Dillon the case was different. Looking across the floor of the House, he could see Mr. Chamberlain, his keen face lighted up, his hands on the corner of the bench ready to spring up the moment he resumed his seat. He knew now what had been the meaning of Mr. T. W. Russell's hasty rush from the House towards the Library, and his jubilant return with another scrap of paper. They had detected his blunder, and he was able to estimate what measure of charitable construction it was likely to receive from that quarter.

He was still in possession of the House, and had the next turn of the game in his hands. How should he play it? Either he might at once admit his blunder, make such apology and explanation as was possible, and, at least, forestall the plainly contemplated action of Mr. Chamberlain; or he might go on to the end, take his beating at the hands of the jubilant enemy, and thereafter endeavour to put himself right with the House and the country.

T. W. RUSSELL'S RUSH.

As every one knows, Mr. Dillon, rightly or wrongly regarded as a matter of tactics, adopted the latter plan. But decision had to be taken as he stood there, the scrap of paper scorching his hand, the necessity of continuing and connecting his sentences imperative, the crowded House looking on. It was about as bad a five minutes as ever fell to the lot of a man actually off the rack, and was gone through with marvellous self-possession.

CHAPTER X

NOVEMBER

MR. GLADSTONE, meditating in the brief recess on the Parliament which meets again in the month of November, after one of the most arduous Sessions of modern times, has come to the conclusion that, taking it as a whole, whilst it has developed no marked phases of individual brilliancy or Parliamentary capacity, the present House of Commons is rather above the average than below it. That is an opinion possibly unconsciously influenced by the fact that it has, in face of unprecedented opposition, passed the Home Rule Bill.

New Lights in the New House.

However it be as to the general composition of the new House, there can be no question of the accuracy of the admission that at the end of twelve months no new member has stood forth with promise of making a high or even a first-class position. It is possible that the peculiar circumstances of the Session have in some degree been responsible for this. For months, when dealing with the principal measures of the year, the gag was morally enforced upon the rank and file of the Ministerial party. No one concerned for the advance of the Bill wanted to know what a young member thought of it, or how, opportunity given him, he would express himself. What was wanted was his vote.

This state of things did not extend to the Opposition side. There there was the incentive of performing a double service to the party. By talking for half an hour a young

Conservative of debating capacity might pick a hole in the Home Rule Bill. By talking for sixty minutes, even if he said nothing to the point, he would postpone by an hour the passage of the obnoxious measure. It was a fine opportunity for young Chathams on the Conservative side. The most striking if not the sole result has been Mr. "Tommy" Bowles. The member for King's Lynn early perceived his chance, and, late and early, has made use of it. Omniscient, impervious, he has filled so large a space on the Parliamentary canvas that there is hardly room for other figures; which in view of the thirst for variety that marks average mankind, seems a pity. Other new members on the Conservative side whose figures are partly visible behind the gigantic personality of the member for King's Lynn are Mr. Dunbar Barton, who has delivered some weighty speeches; Mr. Byrne, who early caught the indescribable House of Commons' manner; and Mr. Vicary Gibbs, who has usefully instructed Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Goschen, and other tyros on financial matters, not to speak of his interposition on the final step of the Home Rule Bill in Committee, which, undesignedly, led to the most memorable riot seen in the House of Commons since Cromwell's day.

"Tommy" Bowles, *et cie.*

"TOMMY" BOWLES.

Mr. Carson is a gentleman who enjoys the confidence of his colleagues on the Front Opposition Bench, notably that of Mr. Arthur Balfour, no mean judge of Parliamentary capacity. It must be said from the point of view of the dispassionate observer, that the junior member for Dublin University has not, in several speeches made since Parliament met, justified expectation. He is not as yet able

Mr. Carson.

to shake off the manner learned through a long course of Crown prosecutions in Ireland. When he is discussing the speech or action of an hon. or right hon. gentleman opposite, he always treats him as if he had found him in the dock, and as if his brief hinted at unutterable crimes brought home by the inquiry and testimony of members of the Irish Constabulary. The manner is so natural and ingrained that there is doubt whether it will ever be overcome or even modified. This is a pity, for it is simply professional. Nevertheless—indeed, therefore—it will never *do in the House of Commons.*

"COERCION CARSON."

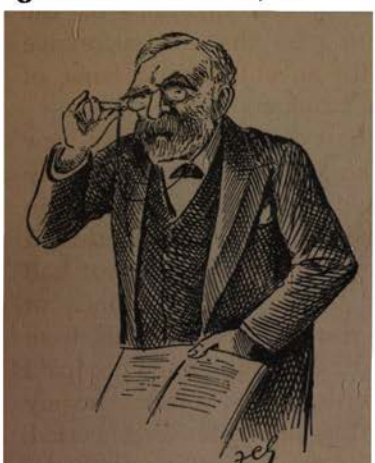
Mr. Morton—not Alpheus Cleophas.

On the Liberal side the name *of Mr. E. C. J.* Morton is the only one that occurs to the mind in search of promise among new members. The matter of his speech is admirable, its arrangement lucid, its argument persuasive. Success is marred by lack of grace in delivery, accentuated by Mr. Morton's insistence on addressing the House from the corner seat of the front bench below the gangway. It is apparently a small matter, but he would, for immediate effect, do twice as well if he spoke from a back bench. The position would have the double effect of making less obtrusive the appalling collection of papers which seem indispensable to his addresses, and would relieve a sensitive audience from the distraction of ungainly movements as, inflamed by his own eloquence, he, with shuffling feet, restlessly moves up and down and halfway round.

Wales has brought no new member of note into the Parliamentary field, nor is there anything new from Ireland. Scotland, with the dry humour for which it was ever

famous, has contributed Mr. Weir and Dr. Macgregor. It would be impossible for the ordinary student of Parliamentary reports to understand why these two gentlemen should make the House roar with laughter. It is not easy by pen description to convey the secret. It lies in subtle eccentricities of manner, voice, attitude, and gesture. Mr. Weir, his useful legislative career unhappily handicapped by indisposition, has never taken part in ordered debate. He has found a wide and fruitful field of labour in addressing questions to Ministers. They do not often rise nearer to heights of Imperial interest than is found in the state of the drains at Pitlochrie, the tardy arrival of a train on the Highland Railway, or the postponement by forty minutes of a telegram addressed to a fishmonger who thought it would reach Lochaber no more.

Mr. Weir.



MR. GALLOWAY WEIR.

If Mr. Weir's mission, when he rises with questions in hand, were to announce that the Russians are bivouacked on the Pamirs, or that the Tricolour flag flaunts over Bangkok, his manner could not be more impressive.

It is testimony to the richness of the soil that he has grafted upon it two distinct manners. When he first delighted the House by appearing at question time, he was wont slowly to rise in response to the Speaker's call. For a moment no sound issued from his lips. He gazed round the waiting House, and then, drawing forth his *pince-nez*, placed it on his nose with majestic sweep of the right arm. Another pause, and there was heard, rolling through the hushed Chamber, a deep chest note saying, "Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to ask the right hon. gentleman the Secretary for Scotland Ques-ti-on Number Eighty-

three." Mr. Weir did not forthwith drop into his seat as others do when they have put a question. With another majestic sweep of the arm he removed the *pince-nez*, glanced round to watch the effect of his interposition, and slowly subsided, staring haughtily round at members rolling about in their seats in ecstasy of laughter at the little comedy. He rarely had less than a cluster of four questions on the paper, and, in time, it came to pass that his successive rising to put them was hailed with an enthusiastic burst of cheering that plainly puzzled the strangers in the gallery.

Towards the middle of the Session he achieved a new success. At an epoch when the Government were sorely pressed for time, he rose and, addressing Mr. Gladstone in his slow, solemn manner, invited him to state whether it would not be more convenient for members who had questions on the paper simply to recite the number, at which cue the Minister should rise and reply. This, from a gentleman whose preliminaries to a question often occupied as much time as the setting forth of the answer, hugely delighted the House. Mr. Weir was not to be disconcerted, and the next day, having on the paper his customary cluster of interrogations, he, being called on by the Speaker, responded with the remark, "Forty-four," going on as his turn came round with the subsequent remarks, "Forty-five," "Forty-six," "Forty-seven." No mere print could indicate the force and meaning he threw into the intonation of these numerals.

As for the purport of these momentous interrogatories, I take at random two, following in a group of six which appear on one day's paper on an evening just before the adjournment for the holidays:—

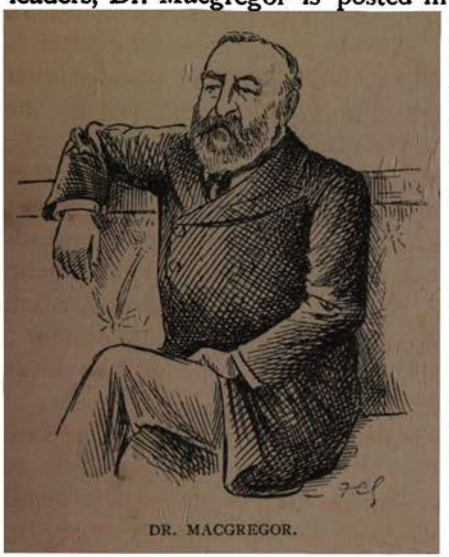
"To ask the Secretary for Scotland, whether he is aware that Mr. Gordon, land valuator, one of the Deer Forest Commissioners now engaged in Caithness, has for a number of years acted as valuator for many of the landlords in that county: and, if he will inquire into the circumstances of the case."

"To ask the Secretary of State for War, how many

black powder ·303 cartridges can be fired from the Maxim machine gun before the barrel becomes unfit for accurate shooting."

Dr. Macgregor's manner, not less attractive to the House, which, above all things, likes to laugh, is wholly different. Whilst Mr. Weir sits below the gangway, a position indicative of an independent mind, prepared upon occasion to vote against esteemed leaders, Dr. Macgregor is posted in the rear of the Treasury Bench, ready to protect its occupants against any strategic movement of the enemy. Like his countryman, he is interrogative in his manner, but unlike Mr. Weir, he has been known to take part in ordered debate. Whether rising to put a question or make a speech, nothing can exceed the impressiveness of his manner. He was, from the first, convinced that Mr. Gladstone was too slow to anger against obstructive policy in the House of Commons. He felt unwilling to embarrass his right hon. friend, who, after all, might, to a certain extent, be supposed to know something of his own business. But the manner in which, with elbow resting on the back of the bench, and with legs crossed, the Doctor shook his head at fresh instances of unchecked inroads of obstruction, was more eloquent than words.

Dr. Macgregor.



DR. MACGREGOR.

At one crisis he was moved to take upon himself the responsibility of immediate action. One night whilst the House was in Committee on the Home Rule Bill, he rose and gravely gave the gentlemen opposite a week's notice. If, he said, at six o'clock on the following Friday the

particular clause under discussion were not passed, he would move that forthwith the question be put, "that the clause be added to the Bill."

The Opposition affected to make light of this, but it was not without a thrill of apprehension they found the Doctor at his place when the fatal hour struck. It was a morning sitting, on which occasion the debate automatically closes at ten minutes to seven. Somehow the Doctor missed his chance, and before he could retrieve the opportunity the hands of the clock touched ten minutes to seven, and all was over for the day. But a very short time after a Cabinet Council was held, at which it was decided that obstruction must be scotched, and notice was given of the introduction of the guillotine process.

It was at a later stage of the interminable debate that Dr. Macgregor, whom members had forgotten, again appeared on the scene. The House had long been debating an amendment on the Report stage. The division was imminent. The Speaker had, indeed, risen to put the question, when Dr. Macgregor interposed, and, waving the Speaker down, said in solemn tones, "Mr. Speaker, Sir, one or two ideas have occurred to me."

What they might have been was never disclosed beyond the inquiry, not original—Dr. Macgregor attributed it to the late Sydney Smith—"When doctors differ, who shall decide?" The House laughed so uproariously that Dr. Macgregor got no further, and was fain to resume his seat. Not to this day has he understood why the House should have gone into paroxysms of laughter at his opening sentence, though he probably has since ascertained that the epigrammatic remark he quoted was wrongly attributed to Sydney Smith.

Whilst no young members have earned laurels in the new Parliament, some old ones have added many leaves to theirs. First, appropriately, though not in accordance with invariable custom, comes the Premier. For twenty years I have had constant opportunity of observing Mr. Gladstone in the House of Commons, and

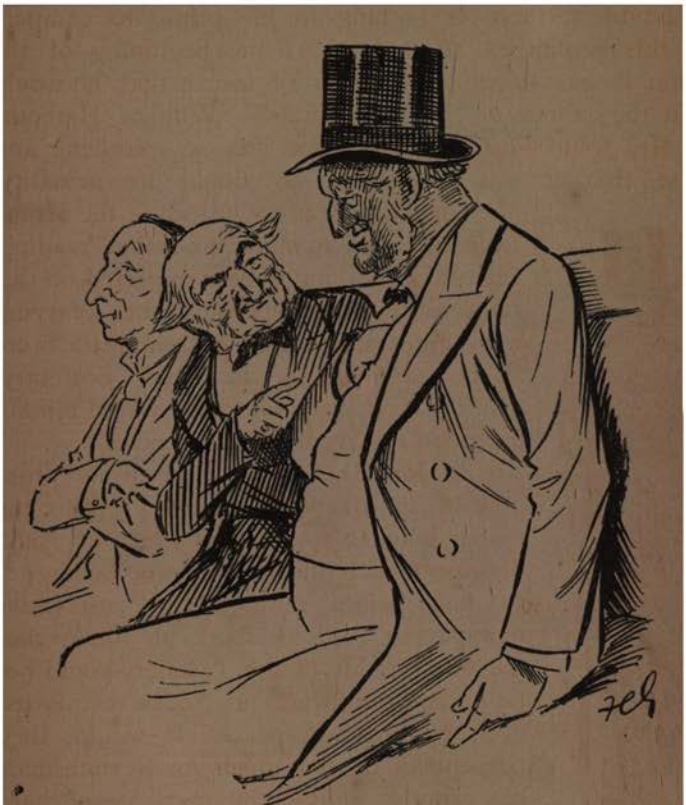
Mr. Gladstone.

declare that never within that time has he excelled himself as compared with the past Session. He may have made speeches more striking in respect of eloquence and force, though of that I am doubtful. Taking the whole conduct of the Session, which has weighed almost exclusively upon his shoulders, there is nothing in his prime to compare with this prolonged triumph. At the beginning of the Session it was taken as a matter of course that he would divide the labour of the year with Sir William Harcourt and Mr. John Morley. The plan was so excellent and precise that it was impossible to doubt its actuality. Mr. Gladstone was to introduce the Home Rule Bill, even to move the second reading. Charge of the long debate expected on this stage, and more especially the wearying work night after night in Committee, were to be confided to the Chief Secretary, whilst Sir William Harcourt would remain on guard reserved for emergencies.

MR. GLADSTONE GOES HOME.

As for Mr. Gladstone, he would probably be in his place every day up to the dinner hour, at approach of which he would disappear with the certainty of being put to bed before midnight. Conservative newspapers, anxious above all things that the precious life of the Premier should not be endangered, were not to be comforted even by this prospect. It would, they perpended, be too much for a statesman, his energies sapped by sixty years' hard labour in the public service.

Of what really happened the student of Parliamentary reports has a general idea, though the situation can be fully realised only by those present in the House day by day and through the long Session. Whilst the Home Rule Bill was to the fore, Mr. Gladstone was, with an interval for dinner, in his place from first to last. Even the dinner hour he cut



MR. GLADSTONE AND HIS LIEUTENANTS.

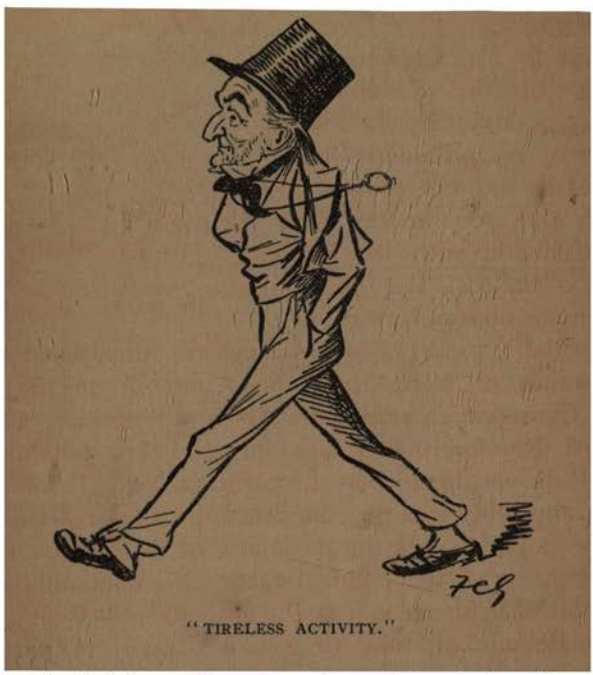
shorter than was others' wont. Often when the hands of the clock drew close to eight and the Chamber emptied, the Premier was found at the end of the Treasury Bench, with hand to ear listening intently to some inconsiderable member at whose uprising the audience had hastily dispersed. Mr. Morley had no chance with him, nor Sir William Harcourt either. It might have been thought that he would be content with answering Mr. Balfour or his "right hon. friend" Mr. Chamberlain, leaving to the Chief Secretary or the Solicitor-General the task of replying to members of smaller calibre. That was a reasonable expectation, disappointed half a dozen times in a sitting. No one was too inconsiderable for him to reply to.

It seemed to impatient onlookers that this constant appearance of the Premier on the scene was conducive to prolongation of the debate. If in Committee he had taken a course that would certainly have been adopted by Mr. Disraeli—either ignored the speech of a second or third-rate man, or let it be answered by the Minister conjoined with himself in charge of the Bill—the conversation would have flickered out. The interposition of the Premier, upon whatever inducement, instantly raised the debate to the highest level, and drew into the controversy leaders in other parts of the House who otherwise would have abstained from speech. On many occasions that was indubitably true. The habit is mentioned here merely in illustration of the tireless activity of the youthful octogenarian.

The success which attended a much disputed strategy of the Premier's on analogous lines, makes one chary of assuming that he was, on the whole, wrong in this particular matter. On successive stages of the Bill the obstruction with which it was met wore away such patience as is possessed by the Radical section of his supporters. Had they won their way, the duration of the struggle would have been nearer forty days than eighty-two. Since the Reform Bill of 1831 was disposed of in forty-seven days, the Corn Laws repealed in ten days, the Reform Bill of 1867 passed in thirty-four days, the Irish Church disestablished in nineteen

days, and the Irish Land Act of 1881 run through the Commons in forty-six days, that might have been held to suffice. Mr. Gladstone, patient, long-suffering beyond average capacity, resisted importunity, and without once even showing signs of losing his temper, politely pegged away.

He had his reward in a triumph which, as far as I have observed, did not in the comments on the final stage of the controversy receive the notice it merited. A main plank in



"TIRELESS ACTIVITY."

Mr. Chamberlain's policy, eagerly adopted by the united Opposition, was to force the hand of the Government in the matter of the Closure, and thus provide excuse for the House of Lords to throw out the Bill on the ground that it had not been fully debated in the Commons. The Old Parliamentary Hand perceived this game, and though Mr. Chamberlain won to the extent that the Closure was in the end systematically applied, Mr. Gladstone trumped his card by allotting to the measure a period of discussion equal in

the aggregate to what had sufficed for the establishment of the Union, the passing of the Reform Act, and the Repeal of the Corn Laws. The result of this was seen when the Bill reached the Lords. Neither Lord · Salisbury, as Leader of the Conservative Opposition, nor Lord Selborne, representing the Dissentient Liberals, once alluded to "the gag."

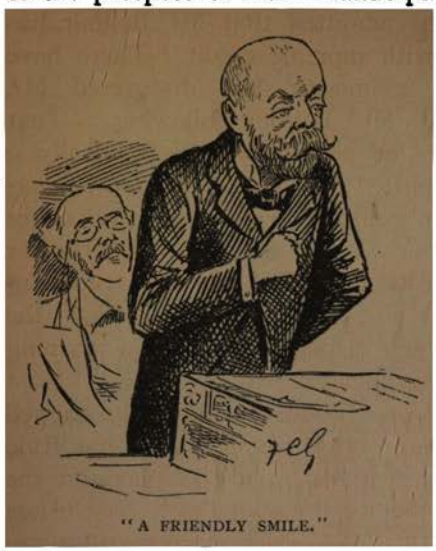
"I SEE YOU, MR. FOX."

Next to Mr. Gladstone, the honours of the Session undoubtedly rest with Mr. Balfour. The fact that he has not pushed his way to the front makes fuller the satisfaction with which his arrival is hailed. His position has been one of peculiar difficulty. Early in the Session his supremacy was threatened by the reappearance of Lord Randolph Churchill on the scene. In the Conservative ranks there was a sneaking affection for Lord Randolph, in which lurked grave potentialities. He had shown them sport in earlier days. To him more than to any other was due the overthrow of Mr. Gladstone's Ministry in 1885. At the beginning of the Session he was the dark horse of the political race. No one could say at what point of it his colours might not suddenly flash.

Mr. Arthur Balfour.

Mr. Balfour at that time had shown no particular aptitude for the post of Leader, to which, consequent upon Lord Randolph's withdrawal from the boards, he had been called. He was plainly indifferent to the pride of place. evidently bored with the duties it imposed upon him. Even in the matter of attendance he flouted the traditions of the commander of an army in time of war. He came late to his post on the Front Opposition Bench, and, like Charles Lamb at the India Office, made up for it by going away early. Of all men in the House he seemed most indifferent

to the prospect of Lord Randolph Churchill's reappearance. It was, I believe, at his instance that the Prodigal was invited to return to his old home on the Front Opposition Bench. It was from his side that Lord Randolph rose to make the speech on the introduction of the Irish Home Rule Bill that marked his re-entry in Parliamentary life. No voice cheered him so loudly as did Mr. Balfour's. As he spoke, no face beamed upon him with such kindly interest and friendly encouragement. The keen-eyed House, watching the scene with the interest all personal questions have for it, recognised in the young Leader's bearing at this critical epoch the simple influence of a fine nature incapable of petty jealousy, indifferent to personal aggrandisement.



"A FRIENDLY SMILE."

Another and more truculent horn of Mr. Balfour's dilemma projected from the corner seat below the gangway on the benches opposite. It is no easy matter to run in double harness

Mr. Chamberlain.

"DOUBLE HARNESS."

with Mr. Chamberlain. At the end of a memorable and exciting course, it must be admitted that Mr. Balfour has achieved the undertaking with supreme credit. There have been times when party animosity has discovered Mr. Chamberlain leading and Mr. Balfour following. That would, in the circumstances, be personally and politically a position in which a high-spirited man would find life unbearable, in which open revolt would be irresistible. Whatever may have been Mr. Balfour's secret thoughts at particular turns of the long game, he has never publicly betrayed consciousness of the alleged situation. Only once has the House fancied he showed any disposition to lay a warning hand on Mr. Chamberlain's shoulder.

This happened on the seventy-fourth night "the gagged House" had been talking at large round the Home Rule Bill. Mr. Gladstone moved a resolution designed on the following Friday to bring the Report stage to a conclusion. Mr. Chamberlain resisted this in a speech more than usually acrimonious in its tone, in the course of which his "right hon. friend" on the Treasury Bench came in for something over the customary measure of attention. Mr. Chamberlain began the debate, and Mr. Balfour closed it in a speech not less effective from a debating point of view, but infused by an entirely different spirit. He did not spare the adversary, but his attempts to despatch him were conducted with a grace, a courtesy, and something of personal deference which recalled the highest Parliamentary standard. Unfriendly critics insisted that this tone and manner were specially designed to contrast with Mr. Chamberlain's. More probably it was due to a mere accident of exceptional good health and temper. However it be, it marked an advance in Mr. Balfour's supremacy over the House of Commons from which he has not since fallen away. The marked approval of the most critical assembly in the world has reacted upon him, and success has engendered the resolve to succeed.

In various matters of procedure the House of Lords differs from the Commons. Like the Commons, it is pre-

sided over by a member of its own body, holding his seat by equal tenure. But a gulf, wider than the passage between the two Houses, divides the Lord Chancellor from the Speaker. In the first place the Speaker is elected by the House of Commons. The Lord Chancellor is nominated by, and is actually a member of, the Government of the day. The consequence follows that whilst the Speaker is above all political consideration, the Lord Chancellor is a leading active member of his party. The Speaker never takes part in debate. In the House of Lords no big debate is complete without a deliverance from the Lord Chancellor.

The Lord Chancellor.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR.

One natural consequence of the diverse circumstances under which the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker come to the Chair is seen in their varied measure of authority. The Lord Chancellor presides, but does not govern. The Speaker in the Chair of the House of Commons is autocratic. Whilst the Speaker orders the course of a debate, selecting successive contributors out of the competing throng, no one in the Lords is so poor as to do the Chancellor the reverence of trying to "catch his eye." In a set debate like that on the second reading of the Home Rule Bill, the succession of speakers is settled by the Whips in conference on either side.

Another custom in which Lords and Commons pointedly differ is in the matter of reference to individual members

made in the course of debate. In the Commons it is a grave breach of order promptly and angrily resented for any member to allude to another by name. He is always "the hon. member" for the borough or county he represents, "the right hon. gentleman," "the noble lord," or "my hon. friend." The only variation to this custom is on the part of the Speaker, who when he calls upon a member to take his turn in debate, does so by name. Even the Speaker when addressing the House from the Chair, and having occasion to allude to a member personally, must needs adopt the roundabout style enjoined by the House of Commons' usage. Since the peers represent no one but themselves, this practice would in their House be impossible. Members are accordingly directly alluded to in debate by their ordinary name and style.

Personal References.

In the House of Commons it is the custom for members to wear hats while seated in debate, a fashion which strikes the stranger in the gallery as very odd. In the Lords the hat is permissible, but its use is exceptional. There is a good and sufficient reason for this variation of custom. Whilst the House of Commons have for centuries been engaged in making history, they have never had a hat-rail made for themselves. It is true there is a cloak-room half-way down the broad staircase that gives entrance to the Lobby. But a hat might almost as well be left at home as planted out there. The Lords have hat- and coat-rail conveniently set in the hall outside the glorious brass gateway that opens on to their House. Peers in regular attendance have their own hook bearing their honoured name. It is as natural to place their hats there as it is to leave them in the hall of their residence, and they do it accordingly.

Hats.

Whilst members generally wear their hats in the House of Commons, Ministers are distinguished among other things by usually sitting bare-headed. This is doubtless owing to the fact that most Ministers have private rooms behind the Speaker's Chair, where they can conveniently leave their out-of-door apparel. There are not

"My Kingdom for a Hat."

many members of the present Parliament who ever saw Mr. Gladstone seated on either front bench with his own hat on. Last time he wore his hat in the House was eighteen years ago. In the Session of 1875, he, having in a famous letter confided to Lord Granville his intention to retire from political life, occasionally looked in to see how things were getting on under Lord Hartington's leadership. Always he brought his hat with him and put it on as he sat at the end of the Front Opposition Bench, a quarter usually affected by ex-Under-Secretaries. Also, he wore his gloves and carried his stick, all, perhaps unconsciously, designed to complete the casual character of his visit and the "hope-I-don't-intrude"-ness of his bearing. When news came of the Bulgarian atrocities, hat and gloves and stick were left outside the House, and have never since been seen in the House with the Speaker in the Chair.

CHAPTER XI

DECEMBER

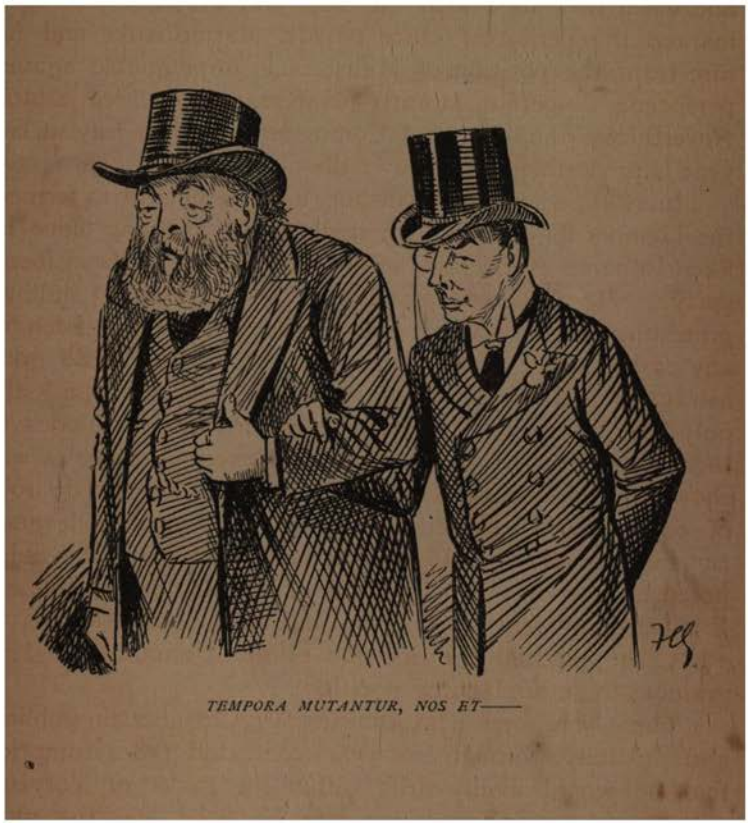
WITH a House of Commons not yet entered upon its second year, it seems premature to talk about the next General Election. Yet in political circles the topic is already stale. It came to the front almost as soon as the new Parliament met. There were authorities who declared, and seemed to have convinced themselves of the accuracy of their forecast, that the new House would not live through its first Session. Some, not to be lacking in precision, fixed Easter as the limit of its troubled life. **The Ministerial Majority.**

As we know, the House is not only still living but is still sitting, a Session running to the length of nearly eight months not being enough to sap its young energy. As for the Ministerial majority, jeered at as fragile and insufficient for everyday work, those who saw strength in its very narrowness have been justified by the result. A Liberal majority in the House of Commons is bound to crumble away as the sparks fly upward. A majority of from eighty to over one hundred begins the process with a light heart in the first week a Liberal Ministry takes its seat on the Treasury Bench. With such a backing, what does it matter if ten, twenty, even thirty members, returned to support the Government, set up in business for themselves? With a majority of only forty, the instinct of self-preservation is

alert and predominant. If on any division the majority falls by even a unit below the normal figure, there is a close, sharp examination of the lists, which brings to light the identity of the laggard or the rebel. The condition of affairs places exceptional power in the hands of the Whips, and when it is used with the skill and urbanity that have marked the period of office of Mr. Marjoribanks and his rare team, the position of Ministers is impregnable against persistent, desperate, adroitly-planned and well-led attack. Nevertheless the House of Commons elected in July of last year is predestined to an early dissolution.

In 1886, when Lord Salisbury's Government was formed, the Member for Birmingham might have had any office he liked to name as the price of his defection from the Liberal party. He declined to take the Conservative shilling, protesting that he was not less Liberal than he had been at any earlier stage. It was the Liberal party that had gone astray, he and the few that remained with him being the only true Liberals. He would stand in with the Tories in their opposition to Home Rule, and even on that, as was shown by the Round Table confabulation, he was desirous of coming to an understanding with his own colleagues. But his new allies would make a fatal mistake if they supposed he was, on other questions of the day, less ruthlessly Radical than when, on the eve of the General Election of 1885, he preached the doctrine of the Unauthorised Programme to an applauding populace.

There were some who, knowing Mr. Chamberlain publicly and privately, through six years combated the assumption that he would finally drift within the ranks of Toryism, wherein he was of yore the most detested and the most feared of political adversaries. There have been times during the present Session when it has been difficult to cling to this belief. It would seem that there is no longer room for conjecture, and that the next time a Tory Ministry is formed, the gas-lit roof of the House of Commons, unabashed at sight of many strange things, will look down on Mr. Chamberlain rising from the Treasury Bench, officially to

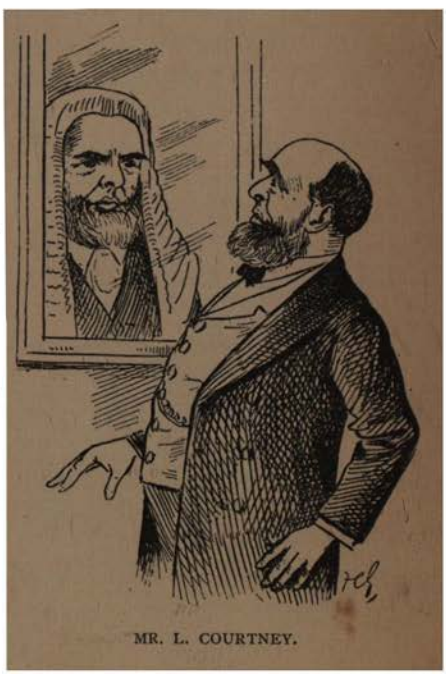


TEMPORA MUTANTUR, NOS ET——

defend the measures and policy of a Conservative Government.[1]

One other important matter settled in anticipation of a Conservative majority after the next General Election is the choice of Speaker. It is assumed that Mr. Peel will not consent to a further term of office, an assumption which, in the interests of the House of Commons and of the country, it is hoped may prove baseless. But it will be seen that, in a particular quarter of the political camp, there is a wholesome disposition to be prepared for every contingency. Should Mr. Peel claim the right to retire with laurels that will remain green as long as the history of Parliament remains on record, Mr. Courtney will be nominated as his successor.

The next Speaker.



MR. L. COURTNEY.

That is a choice which, should opportunity present itself for making it, will receive general if not enthusiastic approval. As Mr. Peel has been incomparably the best Speaker of modern times, so was Mr. Courtney the most unimpeachable Chairman of Committees. It does not follow that because a man has shown aptitude in the Chair at the table, he will, necessarily, be a success as a Speaker. A man may be quick in forming a judgment, may be thoroughly versed in Parliamentary procedure, may have earned the reputation of being inflexibly impartial, and yet may fail when

[1] In 1895 Mr. Chamberlain became Secretary for State for the Colonies in Lord Salisbury's Third Administration.

he puts on wig and gown and sits in the Speaker's Chair. Still, long experience as Chairman of Ways and Means is an admirable apprenticeship for the post of Speaker. Outside the House it may seem odd it so rarely leads to it.

There are several men on the Liberal side of the present House of Commons who would make excellent Chairmen of Committees, though, from various reasons, they are impossible. Sir Charles Dilke would make a model Chairman. Mr. Campbell-Bannerman would do well at whatever station it pleased the Prime Minister of the day to call him. The mind dwells lingeringly on the picture of him seated in the Chair of Committee of Ways and Means. There possibly was a time when, had the offer come his way, he would have accepted it. He has long ago passed the milestone in a Parliamentary career indicated by such advancement. His name, like some others, is mentioned here, merely as indicating the kind of man who, if circumstances permitted, would make a successful Chairman of Committees. Mr. Campbell-Bannerman's capabilities range over a wider field. He would make an excellent Speaker, and will probably some day have the opportunity of showing his capacity as Leader of the House of Commons. At that post he would develop into a kind of sublimated Mr. W. H. Smith. That perhaps does not seem extravagant praise, but those most intimate with the House of Commons will know that "Old Morality" was the most successful Leader

Mr. Campbell-Bannerman.

MR. CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN.

of the House of Commons since the days of Lord Palmerston.

Nature has bestowed upon Mr. Campbell-Bannerman a number of gifts; Fortune has withheld one that weighs even against their accumulation. If he had only been born a poor man, and had to fight for his living, he would have been something more to-day than Secretary of War. But men cannot expect to enjoy every advantage.

Mr. Henry Fowler.

I have been told, upon authority that commands attention, that at one time Mr. Gladstone was bent upon inducting Mr. Henry Fowler into the Chair of Committees. Here again was an excellent suggestion made at a time when the subject of it had outgrown the position. Ten years ago Mr. Fowler would have jumped at the offer, and would have filled the Chair with distinction. With the alternative of headship of a department and a seat in the Cabinet, he could not be expected to step down into the Chair.

The Stranger within the Gates.

With the resumption of the sittings in the House of Commons, the Strangers' Galleries have once more filled to overflowing. Next to the largeness of the divisions taken night after night, often several times in a sitting—an average unparalleled since Parliament began—there has been nothing more striking than the crowded state of the Strangers' Galleries. The time came when the House itself was tired out with the reiteration of debate on the Home Rule Bill. The withers of the strangers were to the last unwrung. This was reasonable, since the composition of the House itself was in the main unchanged, whilst the strangers nightly varied with the chances of the ballot-box. Still, that condition exists through all Sessions, and in none of recent date has there been such competition for seats in the galleries.

There was something pathetic in the sight of the row nightly seated in the corridor which used to be St. Stephen's Chapel. They were next in order for admission when by chance a seat was vacated. On a big night it was a mathe-

matical certainty that not more than two, at the utmost five, would gain admission. Nevertheless they all, to the remote hopeless man at the end of the queue, sat hour after hour patiently waiting. For those fortunate enough to attain admission neither hunger nor fatigue availed to damp the ardour of enthusiasm. They listened with delight to Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Balfour, or Mr. Chamberlain ; they did not budge even when the debate fell into the doldrums of the dinner-hour.

Sometimes, carried away by the excitement of the moment, they openly applauded a speech. In one case enthusiasm was chilled by the applauder being led forth on the Speaker's injunction, and seen safe into Palace Yard. On a still more memorable occasion the strangers in the gallery, looking down on a free fight on the floor of the House of Commons, indignantly hissed. Here was lost an opportunity for fitly ending an unaccustomed scene. In the Christmas pantomime, when the uproar breaks forth, the attendant policeman, with novel and subtle humour, swoops down on the smallest and most inoffensive boy on the outskirts of the throng and leads him to the lock-up. If Mr. Mellor had only thought of it, he might have sternly called "Order! Order!" and directed the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the disturbers of peace in the Strangers' Gallery. After this episode the fracas on the floor of the House might, or might not, have been resumed.

Mr. Gladstone on the Enlargement of the House.

The plans for a new House of Commons include fuller accommodation for strangers of both sexes. The scheme comes up with regularity at the mustering of every new Parliament, the clamour dying away even as the first Session advances, and, the novelty of the situation fading, attendance falls off. Mr. Gladstone has never publicly expressed an opinion on the question of the desirability or otherwise of enlarging the House. In private conversation he makes no secret of his distaste for the proposal. To him it is a place of work, and he is averse to anything that should increase the tendency to make it a rival of the theatre.

For this reason he is in favour of retaining the grille before the Ladies' Gallery, an opinion in which he is supported by a large majority of the ladies frequenting the House. Mr. Gladstone well remembers the old House of Commons, in which no accommodation for ladies was provided. Undaunted by this circumstance, ladies were present at all the big debates for some years prior to the destruction of the old House. Discovery was made that in the ventilating chamber in the roof there were shutters, through which persons peering might see and hear what was going on below. It must have been a terrible ordeal, with no air to breathe save the vitiated atmosphere of a crowded House. But there was great competition for the privilege of standing there. Mrs. Canning, wife of the Prime Minister, was, Mr. Gladstone tells me, a frequent visitor to this chamber of horrors at times when her husband was intending to make an important speech.

THE LADIES' CAGE.

"I remember one night," said Mr. Gladstone, looking back smilingly over a period of fifty years, "the House being crowded for a big debate, something fell on the floor with a distinct thud. It was a lady's fan, which had dropped through the open space in the ventilator."

History repeats itself in small things as well as in great. This very Session, a small group of ladies, *cachées* in the ventilating chamber of the House of Commons, heard a speech delivered by Mr. Gladstone as, sixty years ago, another group in similar circumstances listened to his friend and early master, Canning. It happened on the night of the introduction of the Home

Ladies in the Ventilator.

Rule Bill. Every seat in the Ladies' Gallery, including the little-known stalls hidden behind the Strangers' Gallery facing the cage, had been appropriated. But the ladies of this generation are not more easily repulsed from a desired position than they were in the time of Canning.

Immediately under the House of Commons is a chamber running its full length, part of the elaborate construction of the ventilating department. The floor of the House, which to the casual glance seems of solid construction, is composed of perforated iron-work, covered with fine thread matting. Through this the fresh air drawn in from the river-terrace and elaborately treated in the lower vaults, is driven into the House. In this chamber, roofed by the fret-work of iron, speeches made in the House are as audible as if the listener were seated at the table or on one of the front benches. Four ladies, having obtained official permission, here sat and heard every word of Mr. Gladstone's speech. In respect of purity of air the conditions were reversed as compared with those of Mrs. Canning and her companions. For them the air was a trifle stale. For these it was decidedly too fresh, and a severe cold was the penalty paid for the privilege of being (more or less) present on the historic occasion.

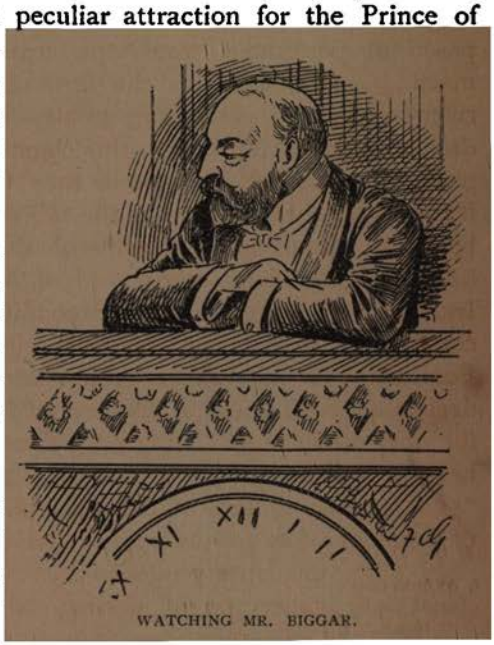
Whom they went out for to see.

An unfailing test of the place a member of the House of Commons fills in the eye of the public is supplied from the Strangers' Gallery. The attendants in the gallery might, if they gave themselves up to the task, supply a remarkable barometer of the current state of public feeling. Strangers always want to see one, two, or three men, and are not backward in asking to have them pointed out. At one time the eager inquiry incessantly ran upon Lord Randolph Churchill. To see him, and, above all, to hear him, if only putting or answering a question, was guerdon for all the trouble of getting the seat. Now, Lord Randolph is rarely asked for, the run being upon Mr. Balfour first, with Mr. Chamberlain a good second.

In this respect, as in some others, Mr. Gladstone stands

apart. Even to those who have never beheld him in the flesh, his face and figure are so familiar that they are easily recognised on the Treasury Bench, whither the stranger's eyes are first 'bent on entering the House. Mr. Parnell, whilst he was yet with us, was one of the principal attractions as watched from the Strangers' Gallery. Another prime favourite was Joseph Gillis Biggar, a concatenation of circumstance that shows how wide are human sympathies.

Mr. Biggar had a peculiar attraction for the Prince of Wales. Many a time in the stormy Sessions of 1880–85 I have seen His Royal Highness in his place over the clock looking down with beaming smile, whilst Joseph Gillis, with thumb in the armhole of his imitation sealskin waistcoat, talked of things present and to come.



WATCHING MR. BIGGAR.

The Premier's Voice.

Perhaps the most striking testimony to the marvellous vitality of Mr. Gladstone is the recovery of his voice. Time was when, he being a chit of something over seventy, his voice suddenly failed. Public speaking became but labour and sorrow, promising shortly to be an impossibility. In the House of Commons he struggled against the growing infirmity with pathetic courage, but was sometimes obliged to own himself beaten. At his age there seemed no reasonable hope of recovery.

Recovery has been achieved, and members new to the present House of Commons cannot realise the existence of

a period when Mr. Gladstone stood at the table speaking but almost inaudible. So completely has his voice regained strength that the pomatum-pot which used to play an important part in his oratorical efforts has become a tradition. In the delivery of his great speech on the third reading of the Home Rule Bill, he did not find occasion once to refresh himself even with the glass of water that stood at his right hand.

It is a happy dispensation that, in the majority of cases, Nature endows with pleasant voice men who do the most part of our public speaking. That a good voice is not absolutely essential to success as a public speaker is testified in the case of Lord John Russell. As a concomitant with other qualifications it is of priceless value. Of the voices of contemporary statesmen, Mr. Gladstone's is of the richest quality, capable of the widest range. In his prime, Mr. Bright was, I have been told, counted his equal in this respect. But whilst, as the years passed, Mr. Bright's voice deteriorated in quality and grew harshly metallic in the upper notes, Mr. Gladstone's voice seems to improve, certainly is more skilfully and effectually modulated.

ADDRESSING THE GALLERY.

Lord Salisbury's.

Lord Salisbury has a sonorous, musical voice that makes it a physical pleasure to listen to him. As compared with Mr. Gladstone's vigorously varied tone, his manner of speech is charmingly equable. Mr. Gladstone sometimes orates; Lord Salisbury always converses. The contrast between him and his son and heir is deeply marked. When Lord Cranborne addresses the House of Commons his words

come tumbling out after the fashion of the waters at Lodore. He is always at white heat, and conveys to his audience the impression that if they would excuse him he would find it a great relief to scream.

Lord Salisbury rarely departs from his conversational manner. He never declaims or overwhelms the adversary with indignant denunciation. But he can upon occasion inflect his voice with a vibration conveying a feeling of scorn and contempt much harder to be borne by persons directly concerned than would be any amount of oratorical beating about the head.

Mr. Balfour has a musical voice and a delivery that has vastly improved of late years, even of late months. He does not imitate the cynically unemotional manner of his uncle. He is indeed given to let his voice ring through the crowded House, as, with clenched hand beating the air, he pours contumely and scorn on hon. gentlemen below the gangway or seated on the benches opposite. His voice is admirably fitted to himself and his speech, having a certain note of elegance and distinction which forms the complement of his public performance and his social amenities.

Mr. Balfour's.

Mr. Chamberlain has a voice so pleasant that its music must do something to soften the asperity of the Irish member who listens to him. It is soft and low —a beautiful thing in a public speaker, especially when there is added the quality of perfect distinctness. When occasion invites, Mr. Chamberlain can throw into his tone a rasping note, suggestive of jagged edges in the dart he is discharging. That happens seldom, and is least effective. The art of saying the very nastiest things in the most mellifluous voice is a rare possession. Mr. Chamberlain has cultivated it to perfection.

Mr. Chamberlain's.

SESSION 1894

CHAPTER XII

FEBRUARY

THERE is a general impression from observation of Mr. Gladstone's manner in the House of Commons and its precincts that his head is kept so high in the empyrean of State affairs that he takes no note of men and things on a lower level. His ordinary habits in connection with persons on and off the Treasury Bench are certainly diametrically opposed to those of Lord Beaconsfield when he was still in the House of Commons. On the Treasury Bench Mr. Disraeli was wont to sit impassive, with arms folded and head bent forward, not without suspicion in the minds of those at a distance that he slept. Nearer observation would show that he was particularly wide awake. His eyes (with the exception of his hands, the last feature in his personal appearance to grow old) were ever alert and watchful, more particularly of right hon. gentlemen on

Mr. G. and Mr. D.

"ASLEEP OR AWAKE?"

the bench opposite. He rarely spoke to colleagues on either side of him, making an exception in favour of the late Lord Barrington. But it was only in dull times, in the dinner-hour or after, that he thus thawed. Even at such times he was rather a listener than a converser. Lord Barrington lived much in society and at the clubs. It was probably gossip from these quarters he retailed for the edification of his chief, whose wrinkled face was often softened by a smile as Lord Barrington whispered in his ear.

Mr. Gladstone, on the Treasury Bench, is constantly in a state of irrepressible energy. He converses eagerly with the colleague sitting on his right or left, driving home with emphatic gestures his arguments or assertions. In quieter mood he makes a running commentary on the speech that is going forward, his observations, I have been told, being refreshingly pungent and often droll. His deep, rich voice carries far. Occasionally it crosses the table, and the right honourable gentleman on his legs at the moment is embarrassed or encouraged by what he cannot help overhearing.

A wary Judge.

Occasionally the Premier seems to be asleep, but it is not safe to assume as a matter of course that, because his eyes are closed and his head resting on the back of the bench, he is lapped in slumber. There is an eminent judge on the Bench,[1] whose lapses into somnolency are part of the ordered proceedings of every case that comes before him. For many terms he baffled the observation of the smartest junior, as of the most keen-sighted leader. He had his sleep, but instead of awaking with a more or less guilty start, and ostentatiously perusing his notes as others used, he, when he woke, scrupulously preserved exactly the same position and attitude as when he truly slept. Closely following for a few moments the argument of the learned gentleman who had lulled him to sleep, he, softly opening his eyes, and not otherwise moving, interposed a remark pertinent to the argument. For a long time this device baffled the Bar. It was discovered at last, and is to-day of no avail.

[1] The late Lord Coleridge.

Mr. Gladstone has no occasion for the exercise of this ingenuity. He may, without reproach, snatch his forty winks when he will, none daring to make him afraid. He admits that, "at my time of life," he finds a long and prosy speech irresistible, often enriching him between questions and the dinner-hour with the dower of a quiet nap.

"FORTY WINKS."

This contrast of demeanour on the Treasury Bench as between Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Gladstone was equally marked in the division lobby. The passage through the division lobby, which sometimes occupies a quarter of an hour, is for Mr. Gladstone an opportunity for continuing his work.

In the Division Lobby.

It was one of the most dramatic incidents on the historic night in June 1885 when his Ministry fell that, engaged in writing a letter when the House was cleared for the particular division, he carried his letter-pad with him, sat down at a table in one of the recesses of the lobby, and went on writing as, at another tragic time of waiting, Madame Defarge went on knitting. It was his letter to the Queen recording the incidents of the night. Returning to the Treasury Bench, Mr. Gladstone, still Premier, placed the pad on his knee and quietly continued the writing, looking up with a glance of interested inquiry when the shout of exultation, led by Lord Randolph Churchill, following on the announcement of the figures, told him that he might incidentally mention to Her Majesty that Her Government had been defeated by a majority of twelve.

On the very few occasions when Mr. Gladstone visits the inner lobby on his way to and from the Whips' room, he strides through the groups of members with stiffened back and head erect, apparently seeing nobody. This is a habit, certainly not discourteously meant, which cost him a valuable friend, and made for the Liberal party one of its bitterest and most effective enemies. Twenty years ago there entered the House of Commons in the prime of life a man who early proved the potentiality of his becoming one of its brightest ornaments.[1] A Radical by conviction, instinct, and habits dating from boyhood, he had raised in an important district the drooping flag of Liberalism, and amid the disaster that attended it at the General Election of 1874, had carried nearly every seat in his own county.

A lost Vote.

"SEEING NOBODY."

There were other reasons why he might have looked for warm welcome from the Liberal chief on entering the House of Commons. Mr. Gladstone had a few years earlier, at another crisis in the fortunes of the party, been a guest at his father's house, and was indebted to him for substantial assistance in carrying the General Election of 1868. A singularly sensitive, retiring man, the new member felt disposed to shrink from the effusive reception that would naturally await him when he settled in London within the circuit of personal communication with Mr. Gladstone. He was in his place below the gangway on the Opposition side for weeks through the Session of 1874. Mr. Gladstone, it is true, was not then in constant attendance, but he not infrequently looked in, and was at least within morning-call distance of the new member. They met for

[1] Joseph Cowen, M.P. for Newcastle.

the first time in the quiet corridor skirting the Library, and Mr. Gladstone, his head in the air, passed his young friend, son of an old friend, without sign of recognition.

It was, of course, a mere accident, an undesigned oversight, certainly not enough to shape a man's political career. I do not say that alone it did it. But I have personal knowledge of the fact that it rankled deeply, and was the beginning of the end that wrecked a great career and cost the Liberal party dearly.

Mr. Disraeli and Dr. O'Leary.

There is a well-known story of close upon this date which illustrates Mr. Disraeli's manner in analogous circumstances. In the Parliament of 1874 there was a gentleman named Dr. O'Leary—William Haggarty O'Leary, member for Drogheda. The Doctor was a very small man, with gestures many sizes too big for him, and a voice that on occasion could emulate the volume of Major O'Gorman's. He was fierce withal, as one of his colleagues will remember. One night in the Session of 1875, when the Coercion Bill was under discussion, Dr. O'Leary was put up to move the adjournment. In those halcyon days it was possible for a member to recommend such a motion in a speech of any length to which he felt equal. Dr. O'Leary was proceeding apace when, his eye alighting on the immobile face of the noble lord who was then Mr. Dodson, he alluded to him as "the right hon. gentleman the Financial Secretary to the Treasury." A compatriot touched Dr. O'Leary's arm and reminded him that Mr. Dodson was no longer in office. "The *late* right hon. gentleman, then," retorted Dr. O'Leary, turning a blazing countenance on his interrupter.

It was pending the division on the third reading of the Empress of India Bill that Mr. Disraeli won over this irate Irishman. The Premier was anxious to have the third reading carried by a rattling majority, and spared no pains to gain doubtful votes. One night in a division on another Bill he came upon Dr. O'Leary in the Ministerial lobby, a place the then budding Parnellite party fitfully resorted to. Dizzy walked a few paces behind the member for

Drogheda. Quickening his pace, he laid a hand on his shoulder and said: "My dear Doctor, you gave me quite a start. When I saw you I thought for a moment it was my old friend Tom Moore."

From that day the delighted Doctor's vote was unreservedly at the disposal of his eminent and discriminating friend.

A Word in Season.

Mr. Disraeli, while Leader of the House of Commons, turned the idle moments of the division lobby to better account than finishing up his correspondence. In the winter months he used to station himself before a fire in one of the recesses, standing with coat-tails uplifted, in an attitude which showed that, though of Oriental lineage, he had a British substratum. As the throng of members trooped towards the wicket, Dizzy, keenly watching them, would signal one out and genially converse with him for a few moments. Those thus favoured were generally members who had recently made a speech, and were gratified for the rest of their lives by a timely compliment. Others were men reported by the Whips to be showing a tendency towards restiveness, whom a few genial words brought back to the fold.

"BEFORE THE FIRE."

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Mr. Gladstone's Hat and Stick.

In a recent chapter, talking of hat customs in the House of Commons, I observed that there are not many members of the present Parliament who have seen Mr. Gladstone seated on either Front Bench with his hat on. An exception was mentioned with respect to the Session of 1875, when, having retired from the leadership and looking in occasionally to see how things were getting on under Lord Hartington, he was accustomed

to sit at the remote end of the Treasury Bench wearing his hat and carrying stick and gloves.

An esteemed correspondent, whose knowledge of Parliament is extensive and peculiar, writes: "There was a time when Mr. Gladstone most ostentatiously and designedly wore his hat after the year you mention. It was when, during the Bradlaugh scenes, he left the leadership, with the responsibility of persecuting Bradlaugh, to Stafford Northcote. He brought stick and hat into the House, and put the latter on during Northcote's proceedings, as much as to say, 'Well, as you have the House with you, carry your tyrannical procedure through yourself. I am not in it.' I think all this must be in your Parliament books."

"WITH HAT AND STICK."

I do not think it is; but I remember the episode very well, and the embarrassment into which the unexpected attitude plunged good Sir Stafford Northcote. The situation was remarkable, and, I believe, unparalleled. Mr. Gladstone had just been returned to power by a majority that exceeded a hundred. The Conservative forces were shattered. Even with a Liberal majority, which at its birth always contains within itself the seeds of disintegration, it appeared probable that at least the first Session of the new Parliament would run its course before revolt manifested itself. It turned out otherwise. A resolution, moved by Mr. Labouchere, and supported from the Treasury Bench, giving Mr. Bradlaugh permission to make affirmation and so take his seat, was thrown out by a majority of 275 against 230.

It was after this Mr. Gladstone temporarily abrogated his position as Leader of the House, bringing in hat and stick in token thereof. When, on the next day, Mr.

Bradlaugh presented himself, made straight for the table, and was subsequently heard at the Bar, the Premier came in, not only with hat and stick in hand, but wearing his gloves. All eyes were turned upon him, when Mr. Bradlaugh, having finished his speech, withdrew at the Speaker's bidding. But he did not move, and then and thereafter, during the Session, Sir Stafford Northcote took the lead in whatever proceedings ensued on the lively action of Mr. Bradlaugh.

Sir Stafford Northcote and Mr. Bradlaugh.

What Sir Stafford thought of the duty thrust upon him by the action of keener spirits below the gangway was suspected at the time. Years afterwards, disclosure was made in a letter written by his second son and namesake. When in 1886 the Conservatives returned to power, Mr. Bradlaugh, who had been furiously fought all through the life of the former Parliament, was permitted quietly to take his seat. Later, a motion was made by Dr. Hunter to expunge from the journals of the House the resolution declaring him incompetent to sit. This was an awkward position for a Government which included within its ranks men who had been most active in resistance to Mr. Bradlaugh's attempts to take his seat. After the debate had gone forward for an hour or two, the present Sir Stafford Northcote rose from the bench immediately behind Ministers, and urged that with slight amendment the resolution should be accepted.

I remember well the scene, above all the startled manner in which Mr. W. H. Smith, then Leader of the House, turned round to regard this interposition from so unexpected a quarter. The House instinctively felt that it settled the matter. If a member habitually so unobtrusive as Sir Stafford Northcote felt compelled to interpose and support an amendment, which, however regarded, was a vote of censure on the conduct of the Conservative party through the Parliament of 1880, feeling in the Conservative ranks must be strong indeed. A Government who showed a disinclination to accept the resolution would find themselves

in a tight place if they persisted. What course would Mr. W. H. Smith take?

Looking at his honest, ingenuous face, it was easy to read his thoughts. Startled at first by the appearance on the scene of the member for Exeter, he sat with head half turned watching and listening intently. Gradually conviction dawned upon him. It was Sir Stafford Northcote's revered father who had officially led the opposition to Mr. Bradlaugh. Now, whilst the son spoke, there seemed to come a voice from the grave pleading that enough had been done to vindicate Christianity and Constitutionalism, urging that the House of Commons would do well to perform a gracious and generous act, soothing Mr. Bradlaugh's last moments (he was that very night lying on his death-bed) with news that the obnoxious resolution had been erased. All this was glowingly written on Mr. Smith's face as young Sir Stafford Northcote spoke, and when he followed every one was prepared for the statement of acquiescence made on these lines. There was nothing more to be said, and without a division it was agreed to strike out the resolution from the journals of the House.

The Artfulness of Old Morality.

Sir Stafford Northcote's letter, dated from the House of Commons, 13th November 1893, throws a flood of light on this historic episode and, incidentally, upon the methods of management of the homely, innocent-looking gentleman who led the House of Commons from 1886 to his lamented death in the autumn of 1891.

"Shortly after the debate on Dr. Hunter's motion began," Sir Stafford writes, "Mr. Smith asked me to come into his private room, and asked me what I thought of the motion. I replied that I did not see how the Government could accept it as it stood, as it conveyed a censure on the Conservative party for their action in the past; but that if this part of the motion were dropped, I thought that the rest of the resolution might be agreed to. I added that I would willingly make such an appeal to Mr. Smith publicly in the House. Mr. Smith quite approved my suggestion. I made the

appeal from my place in the House, and Dr. Hunter consented to amend his motion."

LORD IDDESLEIGH.

Whence it will appear that the whole scene, which entirely took in a trusting House of Commons, was what in another walk of industry is called a put-up job.

On the late Lord Iddesleigh's feelings during the Bradlaugh campaign, his son's letter sheds a gentle light. "My suggestion to Mr. Smith," Sir Stafford writes, "was partly based on the recollection that my father had often said to me that, while he had had no hesitation in discharging what he believed to be his duty in the various painful scenes with which Mr. Bradlaugh's name is associated, he had always felt much pain at having to take a course personally painful to a fellow-member of the House."

SIR HENRY WOLFF.

It is a mistake deeply rooted in the public mind to credit Lord Randolph Churchill with giving the first impulse to the creation of

the Fourth Party. This is an error due to his fascinating personality, and the prominent part he later took in directing what for its size and voting power is the most remarkable engine known in Parliamentary warfare. The real creator of the Fourth Party was Sir Henry Wolff, now Her Majesty's Minister at the Court of Madrid. It was he who first saw the opportunity presented by the return of Mr. Bradlaugh for Northampton of harassing the apparently impregnable Government. It so happened that Lord Randolph Churchill was not present in the House at the time the movement commenced.

The Birth of the Fourth Party.

In later stages of the struggle Mr. Bradlaugh, so far from showing indisposition to take the oath, insisted upon his right to do so, and even administered it to himself. There was nothing in the world to prevent his falling in with the throng that took the oath on the opening of the new Parliament on the 30th of April 1880. Had he done so and quietly taken his seat, the course of events in that Parliament would have been greatly altered. But Mr. Bradlaugh was not disposed to miss his opportunity, and having allowed two or three days to elapse, during which prominence was given to his position and curiosity aroused as to his intention, he presented himself at the table and claimed the right to make affirmation.

Even then, had Mr. Gladstone been in his place on the Treasury Bench, the danger might have been averted. But the Premier and his principal colleagues were at the time, pending re-election on acceptance of office, not members of the House. Lord Frederick Cavendish, then Financial Secretary to the Treasury, all unconscious of the tragedy that would close his blameless life, moved for a Select Committee to inquire into the circumstances. The attitude of the Conservative party at this moment was shown by the fact that Sir Stafford Northcote seconded the motion. It was agreed to as a matter of course.

It was on the nomination of this Committee eight days later that there were indications of trouble ahead. Sir Henry Wolff moved the previous question, and took a

division on it. Here again the feeling of official Conservatives was shown by gentlemen on the Front Bench, led by Sir Stafford Northcote, leaving the House without voting. On the 21st of May Mr. Bradlaugh brought matters to a crisis by advancing to the table claiming to take the oath. It was now that Sir Henry Wolff brought things to a crisis. Having strategically placed himself at the corner seat below the gangway, he threw himself bodily across Mr. Bradlaugh's passage towards the table, crying "I object!" This objection he sustained in an animated speech, concluding by moving a resolution that Mr. Bradlaugh be not permitted to take the oath. It was in support of this resolution that Lord Randolph Churchill appeared upon the scene, interposing in the adjourned debate.

MR. GORST.

He was not present during any earlier movement on the part of Sir Henry Wolff. But his keen eye saw the opening to which Sir Stafford Northcote was yet persistently blind. He joined hands with Sir Henry Wolff. To them entered a gentleman then known as Mr. Gorst, and, much later, Mr. Arthur Balfour. Thus was formed and welded a personal and political association which has given an Ambassador to Madrid, has bestowed upon the astonished Conservative party two leaders in succession, and has endowed Mr. Gorst, in some respect not exceeded in ability by any of his colleagues, with a modest knighthood and soothing recollections of a too brief colleagueship with Lord Cross at the India Office.

Mr. Gladstone has been singularly fortunate in the selection of new blood for his Ministry. Mr. Disraeli, by some happy hits—not the least effective the bringing of Mr.

W. H. Smith within the ring-fence of office—justly earned a high reputation for insight to character. Till this Parliament, one never heard of "Mr. Gladstone's young men," the innate conservatism of his mind and character leading him to repose on level heights represented by personages like Lord Ripon and Lord Kimberley. Growing more audacious with the advance of years, Mr. Gladstone introduced new men to his last Ministry with success distinctly marked in each particular instance. Mr. Asquith, as Home Secretary; Mr. Acland, as Vice-President of the Council; Mr. Herbert Gardner, as Minister for Agriculture; Sir Edward Grey, as Parliamentary Secretary to the Foreign Office; Mr. Sydney Buxton, in a corresponding position at the Colonial Office; Mr. Burt, at the Board of Trade; Sir Walter Foster, at the Local Government Board, were all new to office when they received their appointments, and each has satisfied the expectation of the most critical Assembly in the world.

New Men and Old Places.

SIR EDWARD GREY.

The Junior Lords of the Treasury who act as Whips were also new to office, whilst Mr. Marjoribanks, though he had gone through a Parliament as Junior Whip, for the first time found in his hands the direction of one of the most important posts in a Ministry based upon a Parliamentary majority.

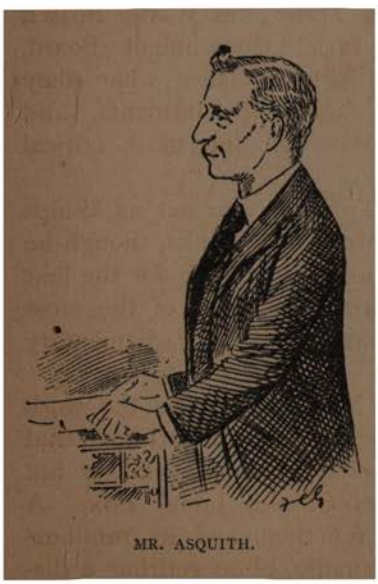
Mr. Seale-Hayne is another Minister new to the work who realises for his chief the comfort of a department that has no annals. The office of Paymaster-General is not quite what it was in the days of Charles James Fox. A certain mystery broods over its functions and its ramifications. Mr. Seale-Hayne is, personally, of so retiring a disposition that he is apt to efface both his office and himself.

But the fact remains that affairs in the office of the Paymaster-General have not cost Mr. Seale-Hayne's illustrious chief a single hour's rest. No Irish member, shut off by the Home Rule compact from foraging in familiar fields, has been tempted to put to the Paymaster-General an embarrassing question relating to the affairs of his office. Mr. Hanbury has left him undisturbed, and Cap'en Tommy Bowles has given him a clear berth. Whom Mr. Seale-Hayne pays, or whence he gets the money to meet his engagements, are mysteries locked in the bosom of the Master. It suffices for the country to know that Mr. Seale-Hayne is an ideal Paymaster-General.

MR. SEALE-HAYNE.

Whilst all the new Ministers have been successes, the Home Secretary, by reason of the importance of his office and force of character, has done supremely well. This must be peculiarly grateful to Mr. Gladstone, since the member for Fife was his own especial find. That when a Liberal Ministry was formed some office would be allotted to Mr. Asquith was a conclusion commonly come to by those familiar with his career in the last Parliament. I will undertake to say that his appointment at a single bound to the Home Secretaryship, with a seat in the Cabinet, was a surprise to every one, not excepting Mr. Asquith, who is

Mr. Asquith.



MR. ASQUITH.

accustomed to form a very just estimation of his own capacity. The Solicitor-Generalship appeared to most people who gave thought to the subject the natural start on his official career of a young lawyer who had shown the aptitude for Parliamentary life displayed by Mr. Asquith. Mr. Gladstone knew better, and his prescience has been abundantly confirmed.

Next to the post of Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant, that of Home Secretary is by far the most difficult successfully to fill. Proof of this will appear upon review of the measure of success obtained by incumbents of the office since the time of Mr. Walpole. The reason for the pre-eminence and predicament is not far to seek. The Colonial Secretary has distant communities to deal with, and so has the Secretary of State for India. The Minister for War and the First Lord of the Admiralty each has his labour and responsibility confined within clearly marked limits. So it is with the Postmaster-General, the First Commissioner of Works, and, in less degree, with the President of the Board of Trade and the President of the Local Government Board. The Home Secretary has all England for his domain, with occasional erratic excursions into Scotland.

There is hardly any point of the daily life of an Englishman which is not linked with the Home Office, and does not open some conduit of complaint. Before he had been twelve months in office Mr. Asquith was hung in effigy in Trafalgar Square. That, it is true, was a momentary exuberance on the part of the Anarchists. The incident leaves unchallenged the assertion that there has been no serious or well-sustained protest against Mr. Asquith's administration at the Home Office since he succeeded Mr. Matthews. Comparisons are undesirable. But the mere mention of the name of Mr. Asquith's predecessor reminds us that the case was not always thus.

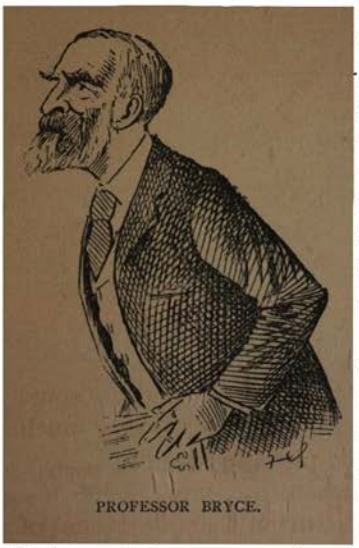
In his Parliamentary career Mr. Asquith's success has been equally unchequered. It was a common saying among people indisposed to hamper novices by unwieldy weight of

encouragement, that when Mr. Asquith was placed in a position where he would have to bear the brunt of debate, he would certainly break down. This cheerful prognostication was based upon the assertion that the speeches that established his fame in the House of Commons were carefully prepared, written out, and, if not learned off by rote, the speaker was sustained in their delivery by the assistance of copious notes. This assertion was so confidently made, and appeared to be so far supported by a certain precision of epigram in the young member's Parliamentary style, that the theory obtained wide acceptance.

Every one now admits that the Home Secretary, occasionally drawn into debate for which he has had no opportunity for preparation at his desk, has spoken much more effectively than Mr. Asquith was wont to do. He has the great gifts of simplicity of style, lucidity of arrangement, and a fearless way of selecting a word that conveys his meaning, even though it may sound a little harsh. To this is added a determined, not to say belligerent, manner, which implies that he is not in any circumstances to be drawn a hair's-breadth beyond the line which duty, conscience, and conviction have laid down for him, and that if any one tries to force him aside he will probably get hurt. This is an excellent foundation on which a Home Secretary may stand to combat all the influences of passion and prejudice that are daily and hourly brought to bear upon him.

Of its general effect a striking and amusing illustration was forthcoming in the closing days of the winter Session. During Mr. Morley's temporary withdrawal on account of illness, Mr. Asquith undertook to take his place at question time in the House of Commons. For a night or two he read the answers to questions put by Irish members, and then, Mr. Morley's absence promising to be more protracted than was at first thought probable, the Chancellor of the Duchy, a Minister with fuller leisure, relieved the Home Secretary of the task. Thereupon a story was put abroad that Mr. Asquith had been superseded upon the demand of the Irish members, who had privily conveyed to Mr. Gladstone

a peremptory intimation that they could not stand the kind of answers Mr. Asquith chucked at them across the floor of the House. It was added that the appearance on the scene of Mr. Bryce averted an awkward crisis, the Irish members making haste to declare their perfect satisfaction with his replies, and their rejoicing at deliverance from Mr. Asquith's hectoring.



PROFESSOR BRYCE.

Then it turned out that the answers given through the course of the week in question had been neither Mr. Asquith's nor Mr. Bryce's. Each one had been written out by Mr. John Morley. Only, on two nights Mr. Asquith had read the manuscript, and on two others the task had been discharged by Mr. Bryce. Thus doth manner make the man.

CHAPTER XIII

APRIL

THE new Session is already fairly advanced, and in some sense it is sad to reflect that business goes forward very much as if Mr. Gladstone were still in his place by the brass-bound box.[1] It seemed when the first announcement of his retirement was made that the House of Commons could scarcely survive the withdrawal. There is not a man in the House to-day who remembers the place when Mr. Gladstone was not a prominent figure in it. It is true Mr. Villiers, having continuously sat since he was first elected for Wolverhampton in 1835, is known as "The Father of the House." But in a Parliamentary sense Mr. Gladstone was born before his father, seeing that he took his seat for Newark in the year 1832. Moreover, whilst Mr. Villiers, literally bent under the weight of his more than ninety years, has long withdrawn from regular attendance on Parliamentary duties, Mr. Gladstone was, up to the end of last Session, daily in his place, actively directing affairs, ready at a moment's notice to deliver a speech which, standing alone, would make a Parliamentary reputation.

The empty Seat.

Up to the last his passion for Parliamentary life was overmastering. He was, probably, never so happy as when seated in the House following a debate. Some speeches, to others unbearably blank of interest, were to him irresistibly attractive. During the last Parlia-

Listening.

[1] He resigned the Premiership on 3rd March.

ment he, in deference to an undertaking extorted by Sir Andrew Clark, promised to limit his regular attendance on debate up to a point marked by the dinner-hour, not returning save upon exceptional occasions. He made up for restraint of opportunity by exacting use of the measure provided. Often between seven and eight o'clock, when the House was almost empty and some unimportant, unattractive member found his chance, he had among his scanty audience the Prime Minister, sitting with hand to ear, apparently entranced. During the interminable Home Rule debates, Mr. Gladstone formed a habit, at which less excitable members used to smile, of moving to the gangway end of the Treasury Bench, sitting there by the hour eagerly listening to a member whose measure of attraction for ordinary men was indicated by the emptiness of the benches. When in Opposition he carried this habit a step farther, occasionally seating himself below the gangway the better to hear an Irish member.

"LISTENING."

Although immersed in affairs of State, Mr. Gladstone had that intimate personal knowledge of the House of Commons which seems more natural among gossips in the smoke-room. He knew every man above the level of the absolutely silent members, and had formed a keen and well-defined judgment of their qualities. He was always on the look-out for promising young men among his own party, and sometimes found

The Undertaker.

them. At dinner one evening during the Midlothian campaign, the conversation turned upon new members on the Conservative side who had made some mark in the last Parliament. I ventured to name one Irish member, seated above the gangway, who had taken frequent part in debate on Irish affairs, and had shown intimate knowledge of the Irish question.

"Yes," said Mr. Gladstone, "but his manner is so funereal. In my humble way," he added, his face wrinkling into the smile that illumined it when he was much amused, "I call him the Undertaker."

There was something charming in this way of putting it, as if he were only a beginner in the way of affixing nicknames to Parliamentary personages, and must not be understood in his "humble way" to be competing with practitioners.

One feeling that weighed with every one when Mr. Gladstone withdrew from the forefront of Parliamentary life was that he, the greatest, is also the last of a type not cast for modern Parliaments. There was about him in the heat of battle a certain chivalry of manner, and in the minutest relationships a courtesy, which is too truly known as "old-fashioned." With his departure the House of Commons loses a standard of daily conduct which, though unattainable for the average man, was ever a wholesome incentive. To gentlemen below the gangway this courtly bearing under, sometimes, almost brutal provocation, was an incomprehensible and undesirable thing. They wanted to see him hit back, give stroke for stroke, and could not understand his patient, dignified bearing. No man, under my observation in the House of Commons—and I have lived in it for more than twenty years—was ever assailed with such bitterness as Mr. Gladstone. None have shown so little resentment.

Baited.

In private I have heard him speak of only two members of the House of Commons with moral abhorrence, and then the tone of voice and visage were terrible to hear and see. When he has appeared at the table following some bitter personal

attack, and the House has hushed every sound in expectation of an avalanche of scathing wrath, he has but lightly touched on the personal matter, and returned to the course of argument it had spitefully broken in upon. Once or twice last Session he turned upon Mr. Chamberlain, and delighted the House by the courtly grace and delightful skill of his reprisal. But it was never savage, or with any undercurrent of nastiness — which possibly, after all, made it the more effective.

"DIGNITY AND COURTESY."

The late Mr. Cavendish Bentinck was much treasured by the House of Commons by reason of the temptation, invariably irresistible, he laid in the way of Mr. Gladstone to indulge in lofty banter. Oddly enough, in these later years, the man who stirred the blackest water of his ire was Mr. Jesse Collings, whose almost venerable inoffensiveness of appearance, as Mr. Gladstone turned upon him, completed the enjoyment of the episode. Mr. Finlay was another member who seemed quite inadequately to stir his wrath. At one time a promising recruit to the Liberal party, Mr. Finlay in 1886 seceded with Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain. Like the other Dissentient Liberals he retained his old seat, which happened to be immediately behind the Front Opposition Bench. His contiguity seemed to affect Mr. Gladstone with physical repulsion. In the heat of debate he would turn round to face Mr. Finlay, at the moment innocent of wrong-doing, fix him with flaming eye, and pour over him a torrent of scorching denunciation.

Mr. Gladstone's marvellous patience has been shown most conspicuously in his bearing towards temporarily

recalcitrant followers. For at least a quarter of a century his worst enemies have been those of his own household. As soon as he has completed the structure of a Ministry, so soon have "caves" been dug around it by hands that assumed to be friendly. His progress has ever been clogged by Tea-Room cabals, the incessant unrest culminating in the great disruption of 1886.

Monumental Patience.

I do not remember seeing Mr. Gladstone more angry than he was one Wednesday afternoon in the Session of 1870. Here again his wrath was excited by an ordinarily inoffensive person. The Irish Education Bill was before the House, and there was, naturally, a Tea-Room Party formed by good Liberals for the destruction of their Leader and the bringing in of the other side. Mr. Fawcett was foremost in the cabal, laying the foundation, after a manner not unfamiliar in politics, of the Ministerial position he later attained under the statesman whom he had attacked from the flank. Mr. Miall, in genial Nonconformist fashion, accused Mr. Gladstone of profiting by the support of the Conservative Opposition, thus earning the suspicion, distrust, and antagonism of his most earnest supporters.

By odd coincidence, Mr. Miall sat that afternoon in the very seat where last year Mr. Gladstone was accustomed to find Mr. Chamberlain. When he sat down the Premier leaped to his feet and, turning upon him with angry gesture, as if he would sweep him bodily out of the House, said: "I hope my hon. friend will not continue his support of the Government one moment longer than he deems it consistent with his sense of duty and right. For God's sake, sir, let him withdraw it the moment he thinks it better for the cause he has at heart that he should do so."

Twenty-four years have sped since that Wednesday afternoon. But I can see, as if it were yesterday, the figure with outstretched hand, and hear the thunderous voice in which this never since repeated invocation to the Deity rang through the House. The outbreak was memorable because rare. Since then the provocation has been as persistent as that which on this same Irish Education Bill

prepared for the foundering of the Liberal party in the earliest months of 1874, and led to all that came to pass in the next six years of the Disraeli Parliament. Occasionally Mr. Gladstone has been moved to outburst of resentment. But it has been slight compared with the incentive.

We have heard and read in recent months much about the courage, eloquence, and statesmanship of this great career. To me it seems that the most strongly marked feature in it has been its quiet long-suffering, its sublime patience. The fight is finished now, well done up to the very last. To-day

> For thee, good knight and grey, whose gleaming crest
> Leads us no longer, every generous breast
> Breathes benediction on thy well-won rest.

Mr. Gladstone is so accustomed to make passing references to his extreme age, and those in close intercourse with him have grown so habituated to the phenomenon, that the marvel of it comes to be considerably lessened. There are two personal recollections which serve to place the fact in full light. One was revived by Sir William Harcourt at one of the Saturday-to-Monday parties with which the Prince of Wales occasionally brightens Sandringham. A reference to the Premier's then approaching eighty-fourth birthday being made, Sir William Harcourt said he had a perfect recollection of an occasion when he was nursed on the knee of Mr. Gladstone. Sir William is no chicken, either in years or girth, and recollection of this affecting scene carried him back nearly sixty years. It was too much for Mr. Frank Lockwood, who happened to be amongst the guests forming this particular house party. Through eyes softened with the gleam of tears, the Recorder of Sheffield sketched on the back of the menu a picture of the infantile Harcourt fondled on the knee of his right hon. friend, both unconscious of all the coming years held in store for them. The sketch is, I believe, now among the prized possessions of the Princess of Wales.

Youth and Age.

OLD WILLIAM AND YOUNG WILLIAM.

The other reminiscence also belongs to the records of a country house, and it is Mr. Gladstone who recalls it. Mr. Henry Chaplin was a fellow-guest. Mr. Gladstone one evening asked him whether his grandmother had not lived in a certain street in Mayfair. Mr. Chaplin assented.

"Ah," said Mr. Gladstone, "I remember it very well. I lived next door to her for a while when I was a child. She used to give evening parties. When the carriages were assembled to take up, my brother and I used to creep out of bed—it was in the summer time—softly open the window, get out our squirts, and discreetly fire away at the coachmen on the boxes. I remember the intense delight with which we used to see them look up to the sky and call out to ask each other whether it wasn't beginning to rain."

Sir Isaac Holden.

Mr. Gladstone is not, after all, the oldest man in the present House of Commons. Sir Isaac Holden is his senior by two years. Of the twain, I fancy Sir Isaac is the younger-looking. During the winter Session, lacking the impulse of the constant fight round the Home Rule standard, disappointed by the success of Obstructionist tactics, Mr. Gladstone, from time to time, showed a distinct falling-off from the splendid form presented through the long summer Session. Sometimes he sat on the Treasury Bench, with chin sunk on his chest, a grey paleness stealing over his face, the light of battle faded from his eyes. He never failed to pull himself

SIR ISAAC HOLDEN.

together on returning to the House after a division. But the effort was made, not, as heretofore, in advance of his entrance, but after he had walked a few paces, with bent shoulders and weary gait.

Sir Isaac Holden, who has now entered on his eighty-seventh year, is as straight as a dart, and walks with springy step that shows no effort. He shares with Mr. Gladstone the characteristic, rare in a man of fourscore, that his eyes are still bright and clear. On occasions when the Standing Orders are suspended, and the House sits late in anticipation of an important division, Sir Isaac waits till whatever hour is necessary in order to record his vote. When the House is up, he walks home.

Unlike Mr. Gladstone Sir Isaac has leisure, means, and disposition to order his daily life upon carefully-considered rules. His day is automatically parcelled out: work, exercise, food, and recreation each having its appointed place and period. He is neither a vegetarian nor a teetotaler, though the main stock of his daily meals is fruit and vegetables. For wine he drinks a little claret. He has lived a busy, useful life, and owes a large fortune to his own industry and enterprise. Of singularly modest disposition, the only thing he thinks worthy of being mentioned to his credit is the fact that he invented the lucifer match.

The Effacement of the Irish Member.

The still new Parliament possesses no more marked characteristic than the self-effacement of the Irish member. If any member of the 1874 or the 1880 Parliament were to revisit Westminster without knowledge of what had taken place since 1886, he would not recognise the scene. In those not distant days the Irish member pervaded the Chamber. Whatever the subject-matter of debate might be, he was sure to march in and make the question his own. If in any direct or indirect manner Ireland was concerned, this was natural enough. But any subject, found in China or Peru, would serve to occupy a night's sitting, and retard the progress of Government business. In the Parliament of

1880 two of the most prolonged and fiercest debates, inaugurated and carried on by the Irish members, related to flogging in the army and the state of affairs in South Africa.

This procedure was, up to 1886, part of a deliberate policy, of which Mr. Biggar and Mr. Parnell were the earliest exponents. They wanted their own Parliament on College Green. If the Saxon, regardless of entreaties and demands, insisted on keeping them at Westminster, they would make themselves as obnoxious as possible. The habit of constantly taking part in debate being thus formed, and fitting easily gentlemen to whom public speaking comes by nature, it was observed, though with less persistence, during the last Parliament, when the Irish party was no longer a political Ishmael, but was the acknowledged ally of one of the great English armies.

With the opening of the present Session a marvellous, almost miraculous, change has been wrought. Its most remarkable development, the fullest measure of rare personal sacrifice, is found in the case of Mr. Sexton. A man of rare gifts as a debater, no one takes so keen a pleasure in the delivery of Mr. Sexton's speeches as does the hon. member himself. This very excess of appreciation was at one time wont to mar his Parliamentary position. For the ordinary speaker, provision of one peroration per speech suffices. So illimitable are Mr. Sexton's natural resources, that he can toss off half a dozen perorations in the course of a single speech. In practice this habit grows a trifle tantalising. Even the most indolent listener draws himself together and concentrates attention when a member, who has been talking for twenty minutes or half an hour, shows signs of coming to a conclusion. When, after declaiming a ringing peroration, the orator, recurring to leveller tones and less ornate style, quietly begins again, the feeling of disappointment is aggravated by a sense of betrayal.

Mr. Sexton.

In some of his set speeches, extending from one and a half to two hours, Mr. Sexton, doubtless unconsciously, has

been known thus to impose on the confidence of the House three distinct times. This long-irresistible tendency to verbosity was regettable as spoiling a position won by natural ability, hampered rather than assisted by adventitious circumstances.

MR. SEXTON.

Since the first Session of the new Parliament opened the Irish members, including Mr. Sexton, have conducted themselves in a manner that testifies to the potency of patriotism. The one object they have in view is to get a Home Rule Bill added to the Statute Book. It is avowedly, as Lord Randolph Churchill long ago, with brusque frankness, admitted, a race against time. Every week's delay in the accomplishment of the end imperils the success of the movement. In these circumstances any Irish member who lengthens the proceeding by speech-making is a traitor to the cause. The Irish members have, therefore, with one accord taken and kept a vow of silence.

This is no new thing in Parliamentary tactics. A dozen years ago a similar effacement of another active party was brought about in the House of Commons. This was the active and useful private member, of whom the late Mr. Peter Rylands was a type, accustomed to sit through Committee of Supply worrying the Minister in charge of the Votes with innumerable questions and pin-pricking criticisms. The Irish were then the Obstructionists, and, taking full advantage of opportunity presented in Committee of Supply, they talked at large through the night in order to prevent Votes being taken. It came to pass that any honest, well-meaning member who desired to obtain information touching a particular Vote was regarded as a criminal. He was undoubtedly by his inter-

Radical Martyrs.

position playing the game of the Obstructionists. It was not only the time appropriated by his remarks that had to be taken into account. The quick-witted Irishmen, making the most of every opportunity, went off on the new trail opened, and followed it for the greater part of a sitting. The well-meaning economist was shunned by his friends, frowned on by his leaders, and took care not to repeat the indiscretion. Between 1880 and 1885 the old-fashioned custom of narrowly examining the Civil Service Estimates, not the least interesting function of a member of the House of Commons, received a blow from which it has not yet recovered.

The consequent self-repression was bad enough for sober Saxons like Mr. Peter Rylands and his mates in Committee. For the Celtic nature the strain must be much more severe. What Mr. Sexton suffers, as night after night he sits below the gangway, hearing other members talk and recognising how much better he could put the points, who shall say?

The extinct Irish Member.

It is curious but not inexplicable how the type of Irish member familiar eighteen or even thirteen years ago has disappeared. Of the band Isaac Butt reappeared on the political stage to lead, but few are left. Even of their successors, the body Mr. Biggar inspired and Mr. Parnell organised, those still in the House may be counted on the fingers of one hand. And what a rare group of individuals they formed! There were many characters that might have stepped out of the pages of Lever or Lover. Butt himself was an interesting figure, a relic of Parliamentary time and manner that to-day seem prehistoric. It is a pity that such a man, with his great gifts, his wide experience, should have been allowed to drop behind the horizon without the tribute of that biography rendered to many far less interesting and important people. There was something pathetic about the renunciation of his leadership by the party he had created. When Parnell was a youth at college, Butt was fighting for Home Rule for Ireland. He was the Moses of this Irish

pilgrimage. Some failings and shortcomings may have justified the edict which forbade him to enter the Promised Land. But it was a little hard that he should have been ousted from the command whilst still on the march he had planned.

I remember the night when, entering the House whilst the usual flood of questions was pouring from the Irish camp, he walked past his old quarters, crossed the gangway, and took his seat behind the Front Opposition Bench. He did not long survive this severance from the majority of his party. He was not old as years are counted. But he had lived his days, had heard the chimes at midnight, was bowed in body, harassed in mind, and this last blow shattered him.

There were few to migrate with him above the gangway. Almost alone, McCarthy Downing followed the old leader, a lachrymose comforter, sitting near him, as Butt, with his back turned to the Irish quarter, sat with his head leaning on his hands listening to the shrill gibes of Joseph Gillis, or the more polished but not therefore less acrid taunts of Parnell.

Mr. Mitchell Henry was one of the few who stood by the old chief, the rift thus developed widening as the influence of Parnell and Biggar prevailed, and open war was declared against law and order and the House of Commons. When the Liberals came in in 1880, and the Irish members, breaking through a new tradition, decided to remain stationary on the left of the Speaker, Mitchell Henry crossed the floor, sat with the Ministerialists, and became a favourite target of the Parnellites.

With him went Sir Patrick O'Brien, the most delightful embodiment of genuine Irish humour of the unconscious, inconsequential order known to the present generation. Sir Pat, with his left hand in his trousers pocket, his right hand shaking defiance at his countrymen opposite, was a precious possession, for ever lost to an increasingly prosaic Parliament. He could not away with the new kind of Irish member represented by

Sir Patrick O'Brien.

Mr. Kenny, "the young sea-sarpent from County Clare," as in a flight of lofty but vague eloquence he called him. "Order! order!" cried the Speaker sternly. "Then, Mr. Speaker," said Sir Pat, with a courtly bow, "I will withdraw the sea-sarpent and substitute the hon. member for County Clare."

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE

CHAPTER XIV

MAY

THE only copy of the Queen's Speech which passes outside the Ministerial ken before the Session opens is that forwarded, with the compliments of the Leader of the House, to the Leader of the Opposition. This is an act of grace and courtesy, happily and accurately illustrating the spirit in which controversy is carried on in English politics. Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Gladstone maintained no social relations outside the House of Commons. But that was an exception to the ordinary course of things. At this day the stranger in the gallery hearing Mr. Chamberlain pouring contumely and scorn on Sir William Harcourt, and observing the Chancellor of the Exchequer almost savagely retorting, may be forgiven if he supposes the cleavage in political relations has severed personal friendships. That is certainly not the fact in respect of these two former colleagues, or of other more or less prominent combatants in the Parliamentary arena. It frequently happens, in the course of the Session, that two members who, between the hours of five and seven-thirty, have been engaged in fiercest controversy in the House of Commons, will be found at eight o'clock sitting at the same dinner-table, discussing the situation from quite another point of view. This is a condition of affairs which does not exist, certainly not to equal extent, in any other political battlefield, whether at home or abroad.

Before Dinner and After.

When the Fourth Party was in the plenitude of its power, it pleased its members to assume all the customs of those larger political factions of which it was the microcosm. Since Ministers and the Leaders of the regular Opposition were in the habit of meeting together on the eve of a new Session, dining, and thereafter reviewing the situation and settling their policy, the Fourth Party had their pre-Sessional dinner. Lord Randolph Churchill tells me of a charming incident connected with this custom. Meeting on the eve of the Session of 1881, they solemnly agreed that they, as a Party, were at a disadvantage inasmuch as they had not before them a copy of the Queen's Speech. Lord Randolph accordingly wrote a formal letter, addressed to Lord Richard Grosvenor, then Ministerial Whip, asking him to be so good as to favour him and his colleagues with a copy of Her Majesty's gracious Speech, in accordance with custom when the Leaders of Her Majesty's Opposition were in conference on the eve of a Session. I do not know whether Lord Richard, in the fashion of his reply, rose to the sublime height of this joke. But the copy of the Speech was not forthcoming.

The Fourth Party and the Queen's Speech.

The Fourth Party at the beginning of their career went a step farther than the regular Leaders of the Opposition whom they, only half in jest, affected to supersede. Her Majesty's Ministers, in accordance with custom, went down to Greenwich for a whitebait dinner at the end of the Session, the Leaders of the Opposition being content with a festive gathering on the eve of the opening of Parliament. The Fourth Party, equal to both occasions, not only convivially forgathered at the opening of the Session, but had their whitebait dinner at the end. In 1880, the year of their birth, they, never afraid of creating a precedent, invited an outsider to join the feast. This was Mr. Labouchere, Mr. Bradlaugh's standard-bearer, whom they had been fighting hand to hand all through the turbulent Session.

But it is a poor heart that never rejoices, and in their young days the Fourth Party were merry grigs.

Some time ago inquiry was made in the columns of a country paper as to the origin of the cognomen "County Guy," as attached to Lord Hartington. I happen to know that the phrase, much in vogue seventeen or eighteen years ago, appeared in the series of papers entitled "Under the Clock," published weekly in the *World*. It was suggested by Sir Walter Scott's well-known lines—

County Guy.

> Bird, breeze, and flower proclaim the hour:
> But where is County Guy?

Lord Hartington was at the time Leader of the Opposition, *vice* Mr. Gladstone, convinced that "at my time of life" —he was sixty-five when he wrote— his public work was finished, and he had earned the right to spend his declining years in the comparative leisure of his library. Even the eminence of the position, and the hitherto unbroken habit of the Leader of a party being in his place when questions began, did not overcome Lord Hartington's constitutional inability to come up to time. It was characteristic of him that he scorned the opportunity provided for quietly dropping into his place, without fixing attention upon his delayed arrival. He might have entered from behind the Speaker's Chair and taken his seat without any but those in the immediate neighbourhood noting the moment of his appearance on the scene. He always walked in from the doorway under the clock, in full view of the House, usually with one hand in his pocket, his hat swinging in the other hand, lounging towards his seat as if he were rather five minutes too soon than half an hour too late. When, in the last Parliament, he returned to the Front Opposition Bench as

"LOUNGING IN."

Leader of the Liberal Unionists, he observed precisely the same custom. He was invariably late, even at critical epochs, and always walked in by the front door.

On one occasion he arrived very early in the morning, but that was an accident due to misunderstanding. It was during the passage of the Coercion Act of the Salisbury Parliament, uncompromisingly supported by the Liberal Unionists. The Irish members had kept things going all night. At five o'clock in the morning, Lord Hartington, in common with other absentees of his party, received a telegram to the following effect:—

"*Been on duty all night. Only us two here. Come down to relieve us.* (Signed) CHAMBERLAIN, RUSSELL."

This was enough to make even Lord Hartington hurry up. The picture of Mr. Chamberlain standing by the Government all night, warring with the common enemy, whilst the Leader was comfortably in his bed, was a reflection not pleasant to dwell upon. Hurrying on his clothes he made his way down to the House, one of a steady stream of Liberal Unionists like himself, abashed to think they had left Mr. Chamberlain in the lurch. Entering the House, they came upon Mr. T. W. Russell and Mr. Richard Chamberlain, keeping guard on the heights where the Liberal Unionists encamp. It was all right, of course. But it was not Mr. Richard Chamberlain who was in their mind when they hurried down in obedience to the imperative command.

"KEEPING GUARD."

Apart from the question of wages members of the British House of Commons do not condescend to acceptance of the various smaller privileges which ameliorate the condition of legislators in other countries. In some of the Continental Legislatures, and in most of the Colonies, M.P.'s travel free on the railways. For the British member, more especially for the Irish representative, the cost of locomotion when going about the country's business is a serious item. Not to speak of the occasional discomforts of the voyage, it costs an Irish member over £5 to journey to and from Westminster. For many Dublin is merely the starting point for a more or less prolonged trip over the highly-priced and not conveniently-arranged home railways.

The Privileges of M.P.'s.

At Washington, members of the House of Representatives, in addition to a fixed salary and liberal allowance for railway fares, have various little pickings, in the way, for example, of stationery, which is supplied *ad libitum* for their private use. Another privilege, indispensable to the due performance of their labours, is a bath. Attached to the Legislative Chamber is one of the most luxurious bathing establishments in the world. Anything, from the ordinary cold tub to the most elaborate Turkish bath, is at the disposal of members. The prospect of being able to retire from a heated debate and enjoy the long luxury of a Turkish bath is sufficient to make a British M.P.'s mouth water. Of course, there is the difficulty about the imminence of divisions. The sound of the division bell, suddenly clanging through the various chambers of a Turkish bath, would cause dire consternation. But daily use would suggest a means of minimising possible inconvenience. There might, for example, come into existence such a thing as a bath pair, corresponding with the present dinner pair.

It will appear scarcely credible that the House of Commons, though widely known as the best club in the world, lacks the accommodation, common to an ordinary club, of dressing-rooms where members may change their clothes for dinner. The convenience of such an arrangement is particularly obvious

A Dressing-room Tragedy.

in the case of a body of men, the majority of whom dine out during the Session, and are frequently, by the imminence of a division, kept waiting about to within a quarter of an hour of the time at which they are due for dinner. Ministers have their private rooms. But for this purpose it is of less use to them than to the private member. They are not supposed to dine out whilst the House is in Session, and if they, greatly daring, dine, they avail themselves of the privilege of presenting themselves in morning dress. Occasionally one lends his room to a friend, hard pressed to keep a dinner engagement, possible only if he can save the time involved in going home to dress.

A few Sessions ago, a well-known Q.C. had an exciting adventure consequent upon changing his dress at the House. He had arranged with a friend in the Ministry, who had a chamber near the top of the staircase leading into Palace Yard, to use it as a dressing-room. He anxiously watched the course of the debate as it proceeded over seven o'clock, hoping it would conclude in time for him to run into his friend's room, and slip into his dinner dress in time to keep his appointment. At half-past seven things began to look bad. A member, usually good for at least half an hour, had risen to continue the debate. On second thoughts, here was a chance. Suppose he were to retire now, change his clothes, and be ready to drive off as soon as the division lobby was cleared?

He acted on the idea with characteristic promptitude, and had reached an exceedingly critical stage in the change of raiment when the division bell rang. The member in possession of the House when he left it, unexpectedly merciful, had brought his remarks within the limits of ten minutes, and the division was called. Three minutes elapse between the clearing of the House for a division and the putting of the question. Supposing the Q.C. to be fully dressed, there was only time comfortably to reach the House from the Minister's room. He was certainly not dressed, and it was a nice question whether it would be a shorter process to go back to the chrysalis state of morning dress,

or proceed to complete the butterfly development upon which he had embarked when almost paralysed by the sound of the division bell. One thing was clear, he must take part in the division. An issue depended on it which would not incline the Whips to accept frivolous excuse for abstention.

Again a happy thought occurred to him. Suppose he were to put on an overcoat and so hide his collarless condition? But his overcoat was in the cloak-room, a flight lower down. The spectacle of a learned and somewhat adipose Q.C. rushing downstairs in shirt and trousers might lead to misapprehension. There was, however, nothing else to be done, and the flight was successfully accomplished. The hon. member safely reached the cloak-room, was helped on with his coat, and, with collar turned up closely buttoned at the throat, he passed through the division lobby, an object of much sympathy to his friends, who thought his cold must be bad indeed to justify this extreme precaution on a summer night.

Privilege.

It is a well-known fact, much appreciated in quarters personally concerned, that no action for libel may be based upon words spoken in the House of Commons. This understanding has been confirmed by an action to which Mr. Arthur Balfour was an involuntary party. In the course of debate, in which he took part as Chief Secretary, he had spoken disrespectfully of a midwife in the south of Ireland. The lady's friends rallied round her, and guaranteed funds to cover the expenses of a civil action for damages brought against the Chief Secretary. Had the case come before a Cork jury, as was inevitable if it went to trial, it would doubtless have proved a profitable transaction for the plaintiff. Mr. Balfour appealed to a higher Court, on the ground that the words spoken in Parliamentary debate are privileged. The Court sustained this view, and the trial was set aside.

I have high judicial authority for the statement that in spite of this rule the position of a member of Parliament

in the matter of libel is not impregnable. He is quite safe, not only as far as words spoken in the House are concerned, but is not responsible for their publication in the newspapers, or their subsequent appearance in *Hansard*. *Hansard*, however, is accustomed to send to each member a report of his speech, leaving to him the option of revision. If the proof be not returned within a few days it is assumed that no correction is desired, and the speech goes down to posterity in the form it was handed in by the reporter. When a member has revised his speech the fact is intimated by a star.

It is herein the distinction in the matter of legal liability is established. A member having voluntarily revised his speech is assumed, by the fresh and independent action taken outside the House of Commons, to have assumed a liability he would otherwise have escaped. An action would lie against him, not for the speech delivered in Parliament, but for the publication of the libel under his revision, and upon his authority, in a widely circulated periodical. *Verb. sap.*

A glance over any volume of *Hansard* shows that it is only the new or inconsiderable member who is at pains to revise reports of his Parliamentary utterances. Old Parliamentary hands like Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Balfour, and Mr. Chamberlain are, in the first place, too busy, and, in the second, too wise, to commit themselves to the task.

A precious Volume.

Mr. Chamberlain once suffered from yielding to the temptation to secure an accurate report of his deliverances on important political questions. In 1885, on the precipice below which unexpectedly lay the fissure in the Liberal party, Messrs. Routledge brought out a series of volumes containing reports of the speeches of some six or eight statesmen on questions of the day. It was an "authorised" edition, the various contributors revising their speeches. At this epoch Mr. Chamberlain was the risen hope of the Radical party. His vigorous argument and incisive invective were directed against the Conservative party, its history,

ancient and modern. It is from this little volume that Mr. Gladstone, in his speech at Edinburgh just before the Winter Session, drew the citation of Mr. Chamberlain's indictment of the House of Lords. It was not the first time it had been remembered. But Mr. Gladstone's joyous discovery sent it trumpet-tongued throughout the English-speaking world. It is this compilation that rescued from the obscurity of daily newspaper reports the happily-conceived, perfectly-phrased, now classical similitude drawn between Mr. Gladstone and a mountain.

"Sometimes I think," Mr. Chamberlain said in a passage the perfect literary form of which tempts to quotation, "that great men are like mountains, and that we do not appreciate their magnitude while we are still close to them. You have to go to a distance to see which peak it is that towers above its fellows; and it may be that we shall have to put between us and Mr. Gladstone a space of time before we shall know how much greater he has been than any of his competitors for fame and power. I am certain that justice will be done to him in the future, and I am not less certain that there will be a signal condemnation of the men who, moved by motives of party spite, in their eagerness for office, have not hesitated to treat with insult and indignity the greatest statesman of our time—who have not allowed even his age, which entitles him to their respect, or his high personal character, or his long services to his Queen and his country, to shield him from the vulgar affronts and the lying accusations of which he has nightly been made the subject in the House of Commons. He, with his great magnanimity, can afford to forget and forgive these things. Those whom he has served so long it behoves to remember them, to resent them, and to punish them."

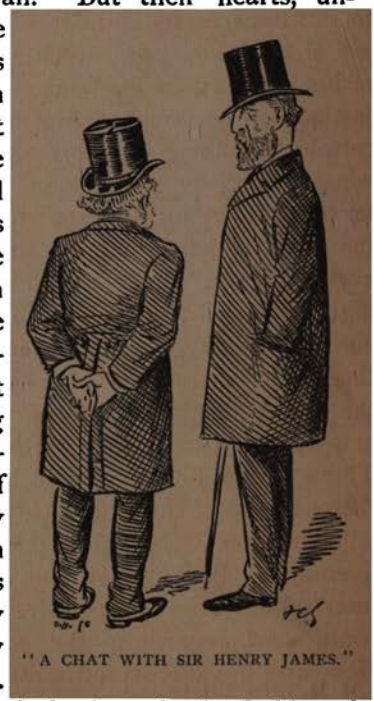
The speech in which this gem lies entombed was delivered at Birmingham, on the 4th June 1885. In the intervening nine years Mr. Chamberlain has had opportunities of regarding the mountain from other points of view, and has discovered quite new aspects.

This volume of Mr. Chamberlain's speeches has long

been out of print. The shilling edition and the half-crown edition command considerably enhanced prices on the rare occasions when they come upon the market. There is one precious copy in the Library in the House of Commons, the condition of which testifies to the frequency of reference. The existence of such a record may be occasionally embarrassing to the politician, but if Mr. Chamberlain were vain, it must be gratifying to the man. It is only a strong personality that could evoke such testimony of eager interest.

Lords in the Commons.

It is pretty to note the deathless attraction the House of Commons has for members who have left it to take their seats in another place. They may be peers privileged to sit in the stately Chamber at the other side of the Octagon Hall. But their hearts, untravelled, fondly turn to the plainer Chamber in which is set the Speaker's Chair. Even the Duke of Devonshire has not been able wholly to resist the spell. Whilst he was still member for Rossendale, it was only a heroic, predominant sense of duty that brought him down to the Commons. Since he became a peer scarcely an evening passes in the Session that he does not look in, chatting with friends in the Lobby, sometimes sitting out an hour of debate, watched from the gallery over the clock. Lord Rowton never had a seat in the Commons other than that under the gallery allotted to the Private Secretary of the Leader of the House. But in earlier days he had much business in the Lobby of



"A CHAT WITH SIR HENRY JAMES."

the House of Commons, and when in town and in attendance on the House of Lords, he rarely misses the opportunity of revisiting his old haunts.

It is many years since Lord Morris was "the boy for Galway," representing the county through several Sessions. Through that avenue he joked his way, first to be Solicitor-General, then Attorney-General, next Lord Chief Justice of Ireland, and finally Lord of Appeal, with a life peerage. During the debates in the Commons last Session on the Home Rule Bill he was in constant attendance. Even when the subject-matter of debate is not one that touches the heart of a patriot, the ex-member for Galway is regularly seen in the Lobby of the House of Commons, his presence being indicated by a ripple of laughter in the group surrounding him.

MR. JOHN M'CLURE.

For some Sessions after the House of Commons suffered the irreparable loss of the counsel of Sir Richard Cross, the Lobby was occasionally suffused by the air of wisdom and respectability inseparable from the presence of Lord Cross. Last Session he intermitted this habit, the Lobby becoming in his absence almost a resort for the frivolous. Lord Monk-Bretton is an old Commoner who has not entirely overcome the habit of strolling into the Lobby of the House in whose Chair of Committees he once sat. Lord Playfair, another ex-Chairman of Committees, is often seen there. The Earl of Aberdeen, before Canada claimed him, was almost nightly in the Lobby and corridors of the House of Commons, albeit he was not drawn thither by personal recollections of former membership. Dukes, except his Grace of Devonshire, rarely descend on the level of the Lobby, and no Bishop has been seen there since the Bishop of London, looking in in surplice and bands after debate in

the House of Lords, was accosted by Mr. M'Clure and genially invited to take a glass of sherry and bitters.

Lord Battersea has rather cut the place in which he long lingered as a Whip, and Lord Dartmouth is not often seen where through many Sessions Lord Lewisham used to walk about, Whips' book in hand, endeavouring to keep a House through the dinner-hour. Lord Kensington is a regular frequenter of the Lobby, and instinctively takes his stand near the door leading to the staircase, where through many Sessions he kept guard, barring the passage of unpaired members. Lord Kensington is not a man of supercilious manner, but there was something of unmistakable scorn in his eyes when they first alighted on the screen which his successors in the Ministerial Whips' seat last Session introduced. Certainly a searching wind creeps up the staircase from Palace Yard when it is wintry weather. But Lord Kensington sat there from 1880 to 1885 without so much as a rug on his knees. A more degenerate race are inconsolable without some contrivance for warding off the draught. In ordinary circumstances this object might easily be attained. A screen of fair proportions flanking the bench by the Whips' side would be fully effective. But this is the main entrance to the Lobby. A full-sized screen would be impossible. Accordingly, a something has been made considerably too tall for the base upon which it stands. The consequence is embarrassing, sometimes appalling. Either the Thing falls outward when the glass door is opened, scaring the new arrival, or it flops inward, threatening to crush Mr. Causton, and cut off, in its flower, a useful life.

Old Whips and New.

LORD HERSCHELL.

Lord Herschell, once a regular frequenter of the Lobby, does not often find time to look in now that he is Lord Chancellor, and, in addition to the ordinary weighty calls of his office, has in hand the

revision of the Commission of the Peace. Another peer, once a constant visitor, who has abandoned the place is the Earl of Ravensworth. He was long known in the House of Commons as Lord Eslington, a representative of the highest type of county member. When he succeeded to the peerage he spent more time in the Lobby of the Commons than on the red benches of the House of Lords. Whatever the season of the year or the prospect of the weather, he brought his umbrella with him, a heavily constructed article, capable of sustaining the weight of a properly tall man when he leaned upon it, whilst he conversed with a circle of friends.

Two Umbrellas.

The only member whose faithful attachment to his umbrella equalled Lord Ravensworth's was the late Mr. Tom Collins. Judging from the shade of the gingham, the determination of the bulge in the middle where it was tied round with a piece of tape, and the worn condition of the ferrule, the umbrella dated back to the epoch of the Great Exhibition. So dear was it to the heart of its owner that he would not risk accident or loss by leaving it to take its chance with the miscellaneous multitude in the cloak-room. Like Lord Ravensworth, he carried it with him in all weathers, and before entering the House to take part in the solemn institution of prayers, he reverently deposited it behind the chair of the principal doorkeeper. Mr. Collins was not a man of abnormally suspicious nature. All his colleagues in the House of Commons were honourable men. Still, human nature is weak. To see an umbrella like that hanging loosely on a peg, or to find it ready to hand mixed up with a lot of ordinary articles, might prove too strong a temptation for a weak brother. Mr. Collins spared many a

LORD SPENCER.

in the case of a body of men, the majority of whom dine out during the Session, and are frequently, by the imminence of a division, kept waiting about to within a quarter of an hour of the time at which they are due for dinner. Ministers have their private rooms. But for this purpose it is of less use to them than to the private member. They are not supposed to dine out whilst the House is in Session, and if they, greatly daring, dine, they avail themselves of the privilege of presenting themselves in morning dress. Occasionally one lends his room to a friend, hard pressed to keep a dinner engagement, possible only if he can save the time involved in going home to dress.

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He acted on the idea with characteristic promptitude, and had reached an exceedingly critical stage in the change of raiment when the division bell rang. The member in possession of the House when he left it, unexpectedly merciful, had brought his remarks within the limits of ten minutes, and the division was called. Three minutes elapse between the clearing of the House for a division and the putting of the question. Supposing the Q.C. to be fully dressed, there was only time comfortably to reach the House from the Minister's room. He was certainly not dressed, and it was a nice question whether it would be a shorter process to go back to the chrysalis state of morning dress,

CHAPTER XV

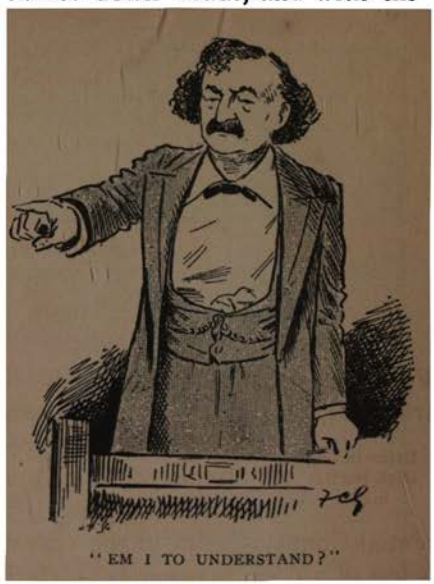
JUNE

FORTUITOUSLY at a time when the re-establishment of an Irish Parliament at Dublin appears to be within measurable distance, there has been brought to light a suit of clothes described as the Court garments of a member of the Irish Parliament who represented County Cavan in the year 1774. It is described as being of a deep maroon broadcloth, embroidered with heavy solid gold bullion, with the figure of a harp surrounded by a wreath of shamrock, and a vine of the same extending around the skirt. The breeches are of a deep yellow plush, and the three-cornered cocked hat is of black beaver, covered with gold lace. From this it would appear that when Ireland had her own Parliament her sons spared neither money nor taste in the effort to live up to it in the matter of clothes. The suit, on the whole, seems almost to suggest the presence of a State coachman. In the mass, it must have been very effective.

Dress in the Irish Parliament.

One can imagine how naturally Mr. Field would take to a revival of this uniform. In the Saxon Parliament he represents the St. Patrick's Division of Dublin City. He sits below the gangway, and on summer afternoons distinctly endows that portion of the House with a haze of reflective light. It is from his shirt-front, which in the matter of displayed area is, at any time before the dinner-hour, remarkable, whilst its glossiness is almost dazzling. With this

snowy expanse cunningly set off by contrast with a black necktie reposing under a turned-down collar, and with his long hair haughtily brushed back behind his ears, Mr. Field might be anything in the high art line, from a poet to a harpist. Actually he is, apart from politics, something in the victualling business. He is great at question time, and is a terror to the Chief Secretary. Having put his question and received his answer, he invariably rises, expands his chest, and throwing out his right arm with impressive gesture, slowly says, "Em I to understand that the right honourable gentleman means——?" Here follows a supplementary question of expanse proportionate to the shirt-front. As a rule, it turns out that he is not to understand anything of the kind. But he has had his fling, and let St. Patrick know that William Field, M.P., is on the look-out tower.



"EM I TO UNDERSTAND?"

I have an engraving showing a view of the interior of the House of Commons during the Session of 1821-23. It is the old House of Commons, illumined by candles alight below the ventilator, a recess wherein ladies found their only opportunity of being present at a debate. It was not the habit of the House of Commons to assemble in anything like uniform, but the dress of the gentlemen of the day was much more picturesque than ours. On this night, in a Session more than seventy years dead, every member of the House wears a coat buttoned across his chest, with deep collar rising up to his ears. Some display

Seventy years ago.

shirt collars of the kind Mr. Gladstone sports to this day. They are in a few cases sustained by a black stock, more frequently by a white scarf loosely tied, in which is set a pin. For the most part the coats are cut away at the hip, the trousers are preternaturally tight, and, where top-boots are not worn, are strapped under the instep.

OLD STYLE.

This was the Long Parliament under the Premiership of Lord Liverpool. Summoned on the 9th June 1812, it was dissolved on the 24th April 1827, having lasted the almost unprecedented period of 14 years 319 days. Eldon was Lord Chancellor for the fourth and last time. F. J. Robinson and Vansittart succeeded each other at the Exchequer. Sir Robert Peel was sometime Home Secretary, sometime Irish Secretary. Castlereagh and Canning shared between them, in succession, the office of Foreign Secretary. All their portraits, with the exception of Lord Eldon's, are shown in this engraving, being the careful work of one Robert Bowyer.

In pictures of the House of Commons done in these later times, a majority of members are shown wearing their hats, as is the custom in the House. Whether for artistic purposes, or because seventy years ago it was not the thing to wear the hat in the presence of the Speaker, no hats are shown in this old engraving. This circumstance brings into fuller notice the greater average age of members of Parliament in those days. On all the closely packed seats one finds only here and there a face that looks as young as thirty.

Up to recent times, the unwritten law of the House of Commons with respect to dress was severe. There was a

wholesome impression that a man setting out for Westminster should array himself very much as if he were going to church. Twenty years ago no member would have thought of entering the precincts of the House wearing anything other than the consecrated stove-pipe hat. It was the Irish members who broke down this ancient custom, as they are responsible for changing the manners of Parliament in more important respects. John Martin was, as far as I remember, the first member who crossed the Lobby of the House in a low-crowned hat. But he shrank from obtruding it on the notice of the Speaker. He carried it in his hand, stowing it away out of sight during a debate. Even this modest demeanour led to an interview with the Speaker. Mr. Brand was then in the Chair. He sent for Mr. Martin, courteously but firmly explained to him that he was breaking an unwritten law of Parliament, and asked him to provide himself with headgear more usually seen at Westminster. Mr. Martin at once obeyed the injunction, a conclusion of the story which shows how far we have marched in the last eighteen years.

Dress in the Commons.

MR. JOSEPH COWEN.

Mr. Martin belonged to the Irish party, Parliamentary *sapeurs* to whom nothing is sacred. Of English members, the first to break the traditions of the House in this matter was Mr. Joseph Cowen. In the course of an already distinguished career, he had never possessed a top-hat, and even the honour of representing Newcastle in Parliament could not drive him to alter the fashion of his headgear. But like John Martin, he, whilst pleasing his own fancy, was careful not to offend the prejudices of others. He always entered the House bareheaded, and so sat throughout a debate, his broad-brimmed, soft felt hat not being donned till he had passed the doors. At

this day the Speaker looking round a moderately full House will see half a dozen felt hats of various ages and shades of colour fearlessly worn. Mr. Keir Hardie, desiring to go one better in the effort to flout "the classes," was obliged to come down in a greasy tweed cap.

The exceptionally hot summer of last year gave opportunity for fresh lapse from the decent gravity of dress in the House of Commons. It was Lord Wolmer who first flashed a kamarband within sight of the astonished Mace, a circumstance that made resistance hopeless. Had the fashion been adventured by some frisky but inconsiderable new member, it might have been frowned down before it had time to spread. But when the thing was seen round the moderately slim waist of the son, not only of an ex-Lord Chancellor, but of the gravest-mannered peer in the House of Lords, all was lost. Mr. Austen Chamberlain promptly followed suit; Mr. McArthur seized the opportunity to display an arrangement in silk of the Maori colours. The Irish members, determined that ordinarily slighted Ireland should not lag behind, met in Committee-Room No. 15, and subscribed a shilling each to purchase a brilliant green kamarband for their Whip, Sir Thomas Esmonde.

Kamarbands.

LORD WOLMER'S KAMARBAND.

The fashion spread till, looked upon at question time of a summer afternoon, the House in the aggregate presented something of the appearance of a crazy quilt. The Front Opposition Bench had already succumbed to the epidemic. Every day when the House met members turned instinctively towards the Treasury Bench to see if Sir William Harcourt and the Solicitor-General had yielded to the prevailing influence. Happily before that befell the weather changed, the thermometer fell, and waistcoats were worn again.

Whilst members of the House of Commons have no special dress even for gala days, the House of Lords cherishes the immemorial custom of wearing robes on State occasions. Whenever a new peer takes his seat, not only is he robed himself, but is the cause of robing in others. The peers who introduce him are clad in raiment of scarlet cloth, slashed with ermine in varying fashion, indicating their rank in the Peerage. With them comes Garter King-at-Arms, the Royal Arms of England embroidered on his back.

The House of Lords.

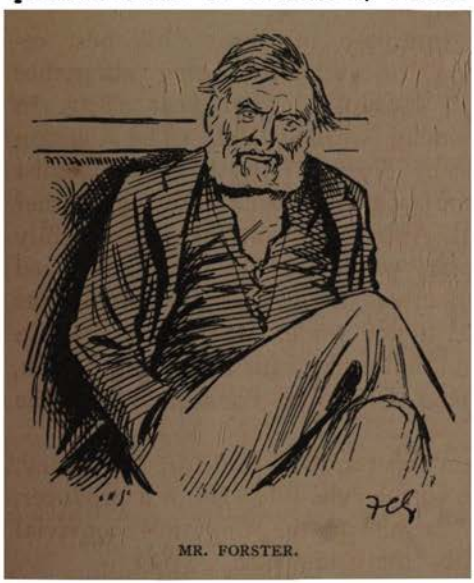
GARTER KING-AT-ARMS AND NEW PEER.

The only time the Lords sit robed *en masse* is on the occasions, now rare, when the Queen opens Parliament in person. That is one of the stateliest scenes in the pageantry of English public life. In modern times its most effective rendering was seen on the day when Mr. Disraeli, just made Earl of Beaconsfield, escorted his Sovereign to the throne, holding before him the sword of State. When "Dizzy" was yet a young man pushing his way to the front, he used to write almost daily to his sister, giving her a piquant account of scenes in which he had taken part. Of all his published works this, perhaps the least known, is the most charming. On the day when Vivian Grey, having realised the dream of his youth and become Lord Beaconsfield, marched into the House of Lords escorting his Sovereign, the sister was dead, and for "Dizzy" the opportunity and habit of writing familiar letters had passed away. A pity this, for an account of

the scene and of the impressions made on his mind, written in the sprightly style of Disraeli the Younger, would be invaluable.

Years have passed since the event, but I can see, as if it had stridden past this morning, the familiar figure, bearing aloft the sword of State, looking taller by reason of the flowing robe that encircled it, the wrinkled face with eyes reverently bent down, and over all an air of supernatural solemnity.

As there is no one like Sir Patrick O'Brien left to the present House of Commons, neither is there any one who resembles Mr. Biggar or Mr. Dawson, sometime Lord Mayor of Dublin, a patriot with fuller allowance of spirit than of inches. It was he who, during debate on a provision of the Peace Preservation Bill, sternly regarding the bulky form of Mr. Forster, then Chief Secretary, warned him that if, armed with the powers of this infamous Act, he were to approach the bedside of Mrs. Dawson in the dead of the night it should be over his (the Lord Mayor's) body. "Baker Pasha," as he was called in recognition of his commercial pursuits before drawn into the vortex of politics, went back to his shop, his early rolls, and his household bread, and soon after flitted to still another scene.



MR. FORSTER.

"Baker Pasha."

Captain Stacpoole was not much known to the reader of Parliamentary reports, but was long a familiar figure in the

House. He had sat in it whilst Palmerston was leader, and his intimate friends had reason to believe that he had more to do with the direction of that statesman's policy and the destinies of the world than met the eye in contemporary records. It was Captain Stacpoole's custom of an afternoon to stand in the Lobby with his hat pressed on the back of his head, his legs apart, his hands thrust in his trousers pockets—with the exception of his little fingers, for occult State reasons always left outside. In this attitude, swinging backwards and forwards on heel and toe, he told at length what he said to "Pam" on occasion, and what "Pam" said to him.

"Pam's" Counsellor.

He did not often interpose in debate, his best remembered appearance on the scene not being altogether successful. It happened, I think, in the year 1877, in debate on the Irish Sunday Closing Bill. The Captain joined a minority of some dozen of the Irish Nationalist members in opposing the measure. Mr. Macartney, father of the member for South Antrim, who at this day worthily maintains the Parliamentary prestige of the family, observed that of this group of members there was not one who was not connected with the liquor trade. Hereupon Captain Stacpoole jumped up, and, falling into his favourite position, shouted out, "I deny that. I have no connection with the trade."

"I beg the hon. member's pardon," said Mr. Macartney, "he is the one exception to the rule. He is not a producer, he is only a consumer," a hit at the Captain's convivial habits much appreciated by the Committee.

Captain Stacpoole has gone to rejoin his old friend and pupil, "Pam." Gone, too, are the O'Gorman Mahon, Mr. Delahunty, Mr. Ronayne, and Major O'Gorman, noblest Roman of them all. The Major had physical advantages which placed him head and shoulders above all contemporary humorists, conscious or unconscious. Whether he sailed up the House like an overladen East Indiaman; whether he sat on the bench with the tips of his fingers meeting across his corpulence, whilst his mouth

Major O'Gorman.

twitched sideways as if he were trying to catch a fly; or whether he stood on his feet addressing the House apparently through a speaking trumpet, the Major irresistibly moved to laughter.

I suppose no man was so genuinely surprised as he when his maiden speech was received with shouts of laughter, members literally rolling about in their seats, holding with both hands their pained sides. The occasion was Mr. Newdegate's annual motion for the inspection of convents. The Major, not only a chivalrous gentleman but a good Catholic, was shocked at the threat of desecration of the privacy of Irish ladies by Commissioners armed with the authority of the law. He had devoted much care and research to the preparation of a speech opposing Mr. Newdegate's motion. The choicest part of it, to which everything led up, was the picture of some historic nun boldly facing the Commissioners, with a verbatim report of her remarks on the occasion. It was understood that the nun in question was of Royal birth, who, either wearied of pomp and vanity, or driven from her high estate by cruel man, had betaken herself to a nunnery.

The House with difficulty kept merriment within bounds up to the moment when the Royal recluse faced the wicked Commissioners. Thereupon the Major, having to speak the nun's part, with dramatic instinct assumed a plaintive, almost a piping, voice. The nun was supposed to give a summary of her personal history to the Commissioners. But the Major never got beyond the detail, "I had a sister, her name was Sophia ——." Even Disraeli, accustomed to sit sphinx-like on the Treasury Bench, joined in the shout of laughter that greeted this effort, and brought the Major's address to

THE SPHINX SMILES.

incoherent conclusion. This speech lifted the Major into a favoured position occupied by him till, cut off by the relentless command of Mr. Parnell, who had no sympathy with this kind of thing, he exchanged the Senate for the Board Room of the Waterford Poor Law Guardians.

Possibly there is no place in the present Parliament for a Major O'Gorman. Certainly there was no one returned at the last General Election who could fill it.

Among the not least substantial reforms effected in the present Session is that whereby, on the opening day, the process of balloting for places for private motions was relegated to an upper chamber. When, last year, the House of Commons, fresh from the polls, met on the eve of a memorable Session, two full hours of its precious time were wasted by a process that would not be tolerated in any other business assembly of the world. Even regarded as a parlour game, it palled upon one after the first hour and a half. Writing about it in the *Strand* of April in last year, I pointed out the absurdity of the process. Ten months later, Mr. Gladstone, incited by a question on the paper, privily brought the subject under the notice of the Speaker, who, with that courage which enables him from time to time to rise superior to effete traditions—and such courage when displayed in the Chair of the House of Commons is heroic—undertook to make an end of the absurdity. When the House of Commons met for the new Session in March last, the process of balloting for places was quietly and effectively carried on by private members in one of the Committee-rooms, and two hours of time, with much vexation of spirit, was saved to the House of Commons.

Balloting for Places.

Now this absurdity has been boldly grappled with, there is hope that another anachronism may be relegated to its appropriate limbo. It is quite time the House of Commons, if it is to vindicate its claim to be a business assembly, should make an end of the whole machinery of the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. This, also, was well enough in the days of Old

In Debate on the Address.

Sarum. It is now, for all practical purposes, as archaic as the hunt for traces of Guy Fawkes, which to this day precedes the opening of each Session, and it is not nearly so picturesque.

The object with which debate on the Address was originally devised was to provide convenient opportunity of challenging the existence of the Government, or at least of seriously debating some crucial line of their policy. It was a full-dress affair, chiefly confined to the giants of debate. If business were not meant, the conversation was usually brought to a conclusion before the dinner-hour on the opening night of the Session. It was confined to the mover and seconder of the Address, the Leader of the Opposition who criticised the Ministerial programme, and the Leader of the House who replied. There, as a rule, was an end of it. Even if fighting were meant and a division contemplated, it was only on rare occasions that the combat was carried over a single night. The House cheerfully sat till one or two in the morning to reach a conclusion of the matter.

The last time the House of Commons completed the debate on the Address at a single sitting was in the first Session of the Parliament elected in 1874. That same Parliament saw the birth of a party which, in a few years, changed many things in the ordinary procedure of the House of Commons. It was the Irish members, with Mr. Parnell and Mr. Biggar just coming to the front, who discovered the opportunities latent in the ceremony of debate on the Address for obstructing business and embarrassing the Ministry. The lesson was quickly assimilated by other factions, and of late years it has come to be a matter of course that debate on the Address shall be extended beyond a week. Last year ten of the freshest days of the young Session were thus wasted. If the Address were the only opportunity presented for raising miscellaneous questions of public interest, the procedure would be defensible, even commendable. What happens is, that on the Address prolonged preliminary conversations take place

round subjects which already stand upon the agenda of business, and will, in due course, be discussed again at further length, upon a notice of motion or the introduction of a Bill.

The House of Commons framing its Rules of Procedure, and anxious above all things to provide even overlapping opportunities for speech-making, supplies a final illimitable opportunity on the Appropriation Bill. This is brought in at the close of a Session, and upon its second reading members may discuss any subject under the sun. Any speech a member may have prepared at an earlier period of the Session, upon any subject whatsoever, may, failing the first legitimate opportunity, be worked off on the Appropriation Bill. This measure plays the part of the seven baskets in the parable. All the elocutionary or disputatious fragments that remain after the feast of the Session are picked up and crammed within its ample folds.

That is bad enough. But since discovery was made of potentialities of debate on the Address, that occasion has been utilised in analogous fashion. Now we have an Appropriation Bill debate at the beginning of the Session, with pleasing prospect of another at its close.

The present Session will be memorable in the long record, since it witnessed an innovation that is probably the beginning of the end of an absurd custom. From time immemorial it has been ordained that members moving and seconding the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne shall array themselves in uniform if they have the right to wear it. Failing that, they must strut in the velvet and ruffles of Court dress. This Session Mr. Fenwick was selected to second the Address. The member for the Wansbeck Division of Northumberland is one of the most highly esteemed members of the House of Commons, a man of modest mien and great capacity, an excellent speaker, who has the priceless gift of conveying to an audience conviction that he knows what he is talking about and means what he says.

Innovation.

Mr. Fenwick, as he proudly records in the pages of

Dod, began his career as a working collier. In 1885, elected to a seat in the House of Commons, he threw down his pick in the Bebside Colliery as a preliminary to having a good wash, changing his clothes, and going up to Westminster. Court dress is, of course, not common at Bebside. Neither is the crimson and gold lace of the dauntless Colonel of Militia, or the epaulettes and tightly-buttoned frock-coat of the Rear-Admiral. If Mr. Fenwick had been inclined to act up to the spirit of the ordinance, he might have appeared in his old collier's garb. With pick and spade under his arm, and lantern in his hand, he would have made a picturesque figure. That, however, did not seem to occur to him, and he had the good sense to break through the tradition by appearing in his ordinary Sunday go-to-meeting clothes, leaving his colleague who moved the Address to dazzle the House with sight of the uniform of the 4th Oxfordshire Light Infantry.

MR. FENWICK.

MOVER AND SECONDER.

The Horse Guards' Gate.

A member of Parliament may at this day send from the House of Commons, post free, a certain number of copies of Parliamentary papers. This is a poor relic of the privilege of franking, long since abolished. Ministers

still have the privilege of sending their letters post free. This is done by the medium of the stamp that marks an envelope "Official: Paid." Presumably this limits the privilege to official correspondence. But the line is, as a rule, not too closely drawn. When is added the fact, only recently established, and, I believe, not widely known in the House, that members may obtain from the post-office in the Lobby packets of excellent envelopes at the bare cost of the postage stamps with which they are embossed, the list of special privileges pertaining to the estate of a member of the British Parliament corresponding with those enjoyed by foreign legislatures is completed.

There is one privilege much coveted by members domiciled in the neighbourhood of the House of Commons. It is the opportunity of approaching the West End by driving through the Horse Guards' entrance by Whitehall. A supporter of the late Government who lived in Whitehall Gardens, and to whom this avenue would have been a particular convenience, used all his influence to obtain the coveted permission. In reply to his importunate demands, significantly addressed to the Chief Whip of his party, then in power, he received for answer, "My dear fellow, if you like I'll get you made an Irish peer. But not being on the list, you may not ride or drive through the Horse Guards."

FRANK LOCKWOOD.

The thing has, nevertheless, been done. A popular Q.C. is accustomed to ride every morning along the Embankment to the Courts. One

day, taking the upper ride skirting St. James's Park, he came out on the Horse Guards' Parade, and thought he would try the sentinelled passage into Whitehall. Walking his horse through, he was challenged by the sentry.

"Don't you know me?" he sternly said. "I am one of Her Majesty's Counsel."

The soldier saluted, and Mr. Frank Lockwood gravely rode on.

CHAPTER XVI

JULY

WHILST everybody, with the perhaps solitary exception of Mr. Labouchere, admits Lord Rosebery's qualifications for the Premiership, there is one aspect unfavourable to his claim which, as far as I have noted, has not been commented upon. The personal appearance of the new Premier does not adapt itself for familiar and friendly representation in the pages of *Punch*. Already Sir John Tenniel has had occasion to try his practised hand, and the result has been a melancholy failure. The stout, elderly-young man entering the lists in the double cartoon which welcomed the appearance on the scene of the new Premier was like, and yet hopelessly unlike, the statesman who has fallen into the line of succession of his favourite Minister, Pitt; not without reasonable expectation of emulating his fame. This is not Sir John Tenniel's shortcoming, as witness the spirited and picturesque appearance in the same block of Sir William Harcourt, squiring the new knight. Nor is it Lord Rosebery's fault. To

Lord Rosebery's Misfortune.

LORD ROSEBERY.

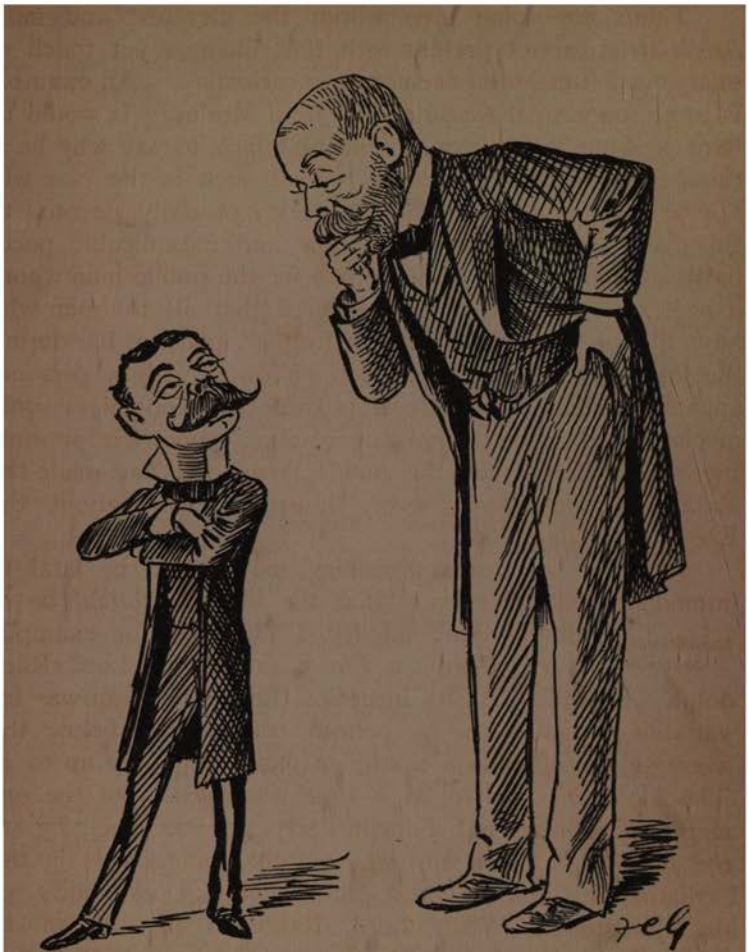
quote the impressive phrase which occurs in the policies of marine insurance, it is "the act of God."

There are some men whom the cleverest and most *habile* artist cannot present with that likeness yet touch of exaggeration essential to success in caricature. An example is to be found in the case of Mr. John Morley. It would be hard, looking at his keen, intellectual face, to say why he is the despair of the caricaturist. That such is the case will appear from any paper, whether weekly or daily, devoted to this class of art. This inscrutable and inexplicable peculiarity is undoubtedly a misfortune for the public man whom it besets. As a rule, it will be found that all the men who have filled a prominent place in English political life during the last half-century have been endowed with a personal appearance that has made it possible for Tenniel, or some of his colleagues on *Punch*, to create a counterfeit presentment which has struck the public fancy, and has made the statesman familiar in every household throughout the English-speaking world.

It is by no means necessary, may indeed be fatal to immediate and full success, that the likeness should be of photographic fidelity. There is, for example, Harry Furniss's *Punch* portrait of Lord Randolph Churchill. At its inception Lord Randolph was invariably presented as a person considerably below the average height, he, as a matter of fact, being fully up to it. The ideal was created at a time when, leader of the numerically infinitesimal Fourth Party, he was emerging on the political horizon, and was nightly doing battle in the Parliamentary lists against the gigantic personality of Mr. Gladstone. When Lord Randolph first began to stump the country at political meetings he was conscious of a feeling almost approaching distrust of his identity. The British public had been educated to expect to see a little man, and when Lord Randolph, with his at least five-foot-eight of height, stepped on the platform, the audience were genuinely surprised.

Lord Randolph Churchill.

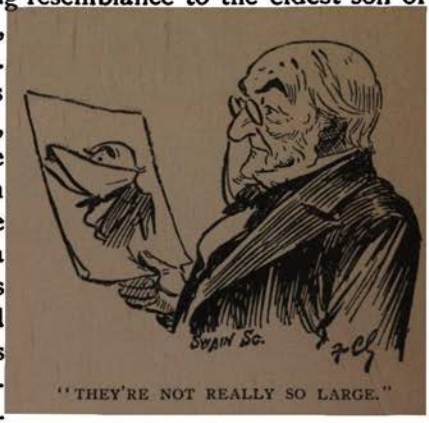
The same tradition has, through the same agency,



"WAS I REALLY LIKE THAT?"

attached to Mr. Gladstone's collars. These are actually of fuller, looser make than has been the fashion of late years. I have an etching from Watts's portrait of Mr. Gladstone painted forty years ago. It bears, by the way, a striking resemblance to the eldest son of the house, William Henry, who died some years ago. Whilst he was yet with us in the House of Commons, sitting for a Worcestershire constituency, one was often struck by a look in his face that seemed to recall a something out of which his father had grown. I had not at the time seen this portrait of Watts's. Looking at the etching, the resemblance between W. H. Gladstone at forty-five and his father at the same age is very striking.

Mr. G.'s Collars.



"THEY'RE NOT REALLY SO LARGE."

In this portrait the now famous Gladstone collars show with even fuller folds than have gladdened the eyes of the present generation. What has happened has simply been that the fundamental Conservative phase of Mr. Gladstone's character, in this connection untrammelled by the interests of the classes, has prevailed. When he was Under-Secretary for the Colonies and, later, Vice-President of the Board of Trade and Master of the Mint, gentlemen wore collars of a certain cut, comfortable and commodious, and he wears them to this day.

Mr. Gladstone at one time grew a little weary of the iteration of the gigantic collars. A communication was made by one of the family to a member of the *Punch* staff. Mr. Gladstone, it was pointed out, was a constant student of the journal, the issue of whose first number he remembered. He had figured in its pages in all guises, represented under all circumstances, and knew no occasion upon which he was not able to join in the genial

merriment of the public. But hadn't there been enough about the fabulous collars?

The hint was taken as kindly as it was conveyed. Harry Furniss drew a picture in which the big collars were presented undergoing the process of burial. But before long they were out again, flapping their folds in the political breeze.

Mr. Gladstone, first in most things, fulfilled in largest degree the by no means immaterial qualification of a public man that his personal appearance should be capable of striking reproduction in the pages of *Punch*. His mobile face, his nervous figure, his unique personality throb through the pages of that periodical for more than a quarter of a century. The late Lord Derby, Lord Brougham, Mr. Disraeli, Mr. Bright, and at this day, happily for *Punch* and the public, Lord Salisbury and Sir William Harcourt, have each and all, in distinct manner, this indefinable quality. As yet Mr. Arthur Balfour has not taken on with conspicuous success. But he will do, will come out all right as fuller opportunities for study are provided.

Mr. Bright and Pam.

To his last appearance in the pages of *Punch*, John Bright was represented as wearing an eyeglass. To the readers of *Punch* the Tribune would not have been recognisable without an eyeglass. To his personal friends he would not have been recognisable with one, since he was never seen in its company. I once asked Tenniel why he always fixed him with the eyeglass. He said he did not know. It was there when he succeeded to the position of cartoonist, and he went on drawing it.

"If," he added, "Mr. Bright does not wear an eyeglass, it is very wrong of him. He ought to do so."

A similar mannerism was affected in all the cartoons in which Lord Palmerston figured. Ever he was presented with a bit of straw between his teeth. This probably had its origin in the jaunty Premier's love of horse-racing. At some time in mid-century, Leech or Doyle, full of stable associations, placed the straw in Pam's mouth, and there ever after it remained.

Lord Brougham's trousers of Brobdingnagian check pattern supply another instance of the success with which *Punch* has arbitrarily associated a fable with the personal appearance of a public man. Possibly at one period of his turbulent career Lord Brougham may have worn small-clothes of loud check pattern. But trousers of such design as Dicky Doyle clothed the Lord Chancellor's nether limbs withal were never seen on sea or land. Apart from this fanciful touch, Brougham's face was a priceless endowment to the caricaturist. A photograph of it in profile would have been sufficient to illumine a satiric page. In the pages of *Punch* it lives through many years, sublimely grotesque with the slightest, subtlest touch of the caricaturist's pencil.

Brougham's Breeches.

MR. FIELD.

Mr. Field has a genuine thirst for information, almost as consuming as that which possesses Mr. Weir. That he can sustain effort beyond that necessary for fragmentary questioning was demonstrated on the occasion when Mr. John Morley introduced his Evicted Tenants Bill. Long looked forward to with keen interest by the Irish members, their reception of it was watched with anxiety from the Treasury Bench. Mr. Field presented himself as the spokesman of the little Parnellite faction, and summed up the characteristics of the Bill in a sentence. "As Scripture says," he remarked, inflating his chest, and rearranging his glossy curls behind his ear—"As Scripture says, 'it is all sound and fury signifying nothing.'"

An Ornament of Debate.

Sir Boyle Roche never sat in the Parliament of the

United Kingdom. He was member for Tralee in the Irish Parliament, representing it from 1775 till its dissolution. There was a Sir David Roche, Bart., in the House of Commons up to so recent a period as 1865. But he sprang from another stock. Sir Boyle's family belonged to Fermoy, and as far as the baronetcy is concerned is now extinct. Happily the picturesque confusion of terms, the practice of which makes Sir Boyle's name live in history, still survives in the House of Commons. There are two of Sir Boyle Roche's bulls which still linger in the records of the Irish Parliament. "Mr. Speaker," he said, on one occasion, lamenting the distressfulness of Ireland, even then noteworthy, "single misfortunes never come alone, and the greatest of all national calamities is generally followed by one much greater." On another occasion he uttered the patriotic remark: "Sir, it is the duty of every true lover of his country to give his last guinea to save the remainder of his fortune."

Sir Boyle Roche, M.P.

Mr. Shaw, for some time leader of the Home Rule party, in succession to Mr. Butt and in advance of Mr. Parnell, was not a man who might be expected to approach Sir Boyle Roche in his peculiar felicity of language. Yet there was one sentence of his, of which I have preserved a note, that is reminiscent of the Tralee baronet's style. At one time during the earliest Home Rule campaign Mr. Shaw addressed a meeting at Cork, held on a Sunday. "They tell us," he said, "that we violate the Sabbath by being here to-day. Yet if the ox or the ass fall into the pit on a Sabbath day we are enjoined to take him out. Our brother is in the pit to-day—the farmer and the landlord are both in it, and we are come here to-day to try if we can lift them out."

Bulls of modern Breed.

When Mr. Shaw came back to Westminster many efforts were made to get him to say of the farmer and the landlord which was the ox and which the ass. But he could never be induced to be communicative on the subject.

In a Budget discussion during the Parliament of 1880-85, Mr. O'Connor Power remarked: "Since the

Government has let the cat out of the bag, there is nothing to be done but to take the bull by the horns." The late A. M. Sullivan, a foremost figure in the same Parliament, assured me that when he was beginning his practice in Ireland he was present at a case where a small farmer brought an action against a neighbour for alleged malversation of three bullocks. His counsel, a well-known and popular member of the circuit, concluded his speech by saying: "Gentlemen of the jury, it will be for you to say whether this defendant shall be allowed to come into court with unblushing footsteps, with the cloak of hypocrisy in his mouth, and draw three bullocks out of my client's pocket with impunity."

But Irish members have by no means the monopoly of this particular turn of unconscious humour. In this very Session Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, speaking in the debate on the Scotch Grand Committee, which he desired to show was designed as a forward movement of the Home Rule Party, said: "They are getting in the thin end of the wedge by a sort of side wind." **English Bulls.**

A similar confusion of idea was more epigrammatically expressed by another member whose name I forget at the moment, who warmly protested against the House of Commons permitting members to "open the door to the thin end of the wedge." It is quite a common thing for nervous members of all nationalities to conclude their speech with the remark: "And now, Mr. Speaker, I will sit down by saying."

The ready orator always finds it dangerous to handle familiar tools and well-known pieces of machinery. I remember a short sentence delivered by Mr. Hopwood, in the Session of 1879. Talking in Committee of Supply, on a vote for the expenses of vaccination, the present Recorder for Liverpool said: "Don't drive the steam-engine of the law over people's consciences." It was Mr. Alderman Cotton, a clear-headed man and an able speaker, to-day Remembrancer of the City of London, who turned out a gem of thought which I gratefully added to my collection.

It was during debate on a motion made by Lord Hartington at a critical moment in the relations between Russia and Turkey in the year 1877. "Sir," said the Alderman, dropping his voice to a hushed whisper, "it requires only a spark to let slip the dogs of war."

ALDERMAN COTTON.

In this same Session Mr. Rodwell, then member for Cambridge, who has long since quitted the Parliamentary scene, was opposing a proposition of the Chairman of Ways and Means affecting procedure in respect of private Bills. He piteously pleaded that, if carried, the amendment "would lead to gas Bills going in to the House of Commons with a rope round their necks."

It was Mr. Thwaites, Conservative candidate for Blackburn, who made one of the freshest hits of the General Election of 1880. "Unfortunately," he said, "the Government is on the wrong side of the book. But, however, we have a prudent Chancellor of the Exchequer, and he has done his best. The right hon. gentleman has done what I would like you all to do, namely: *When you lay an egg, put it by for a rainy day.*"

The Home Secretary is the last man in the House of Commons who might be expected to distinguish himself by a slip of the tongue. Yet there is an occasion, cherished to this day in the memory of young Cambridge, in which Mr. Asquith, entering this new field of competition, characteristically beat the record. It happened before he became a Minister. The Eighty Club were being entertained by the Cambridge Liberal Association, not without an eye on the pending General Election, at which that eminent and impartial "coach," Mr. R. C. Lehmann, stood as the Liberal candidate. A great speech was expected

Jit or Tottle.

from Mr. Asquith, and he rose to the occasion. The Liberals were in high spirits, cheered by the result of a series of bye-elections. Mr. Asquith desired to let whomsoever was concerned know that in going to the country the Liberal Party stood by every plank of their Newcastle Programme, abating not one jot or tittle of their demands. In the heat and excitement of the moment, what he with tremendous emphasis declared was: "Let it be known, gentlemen, that of those just demands we abate not one jit or tottle."

Young Cambridge was too polite to laugh outright at this slip on the part of its guest. Moderation was atoned for subsequently, wherever two or three were gathered together at the cheerful board. To this day "jit or tottle" is a catch phrase among those present on this interesting occasion.

Mr. Gladstone's Neckties.

In a chatty record of Signor Crispi's visit to Prince Bismarck at Friedrichsruh, it is mentioned that one day at luncheon the Princess went up to Bismarck, and deftly adjusted his necktie, which had got almost under his right ear. "For fifty years," said Bismarck, "I have been battling with my necktie. The bow will never remain in its place, but always turns round, and ever to the same side."

AFTER HIS SPEECH.

It is a curious point of resemblance between two of the mightiest men living at the same time in European history, that the little peculiarity here noted by Bismarck as attaching to himself also beset Mr. Gladstone. Often in critical epochs in the House of Commons, as he stood at the table adding to the record

of momentous speeches, I have watched his necktie slowly but surely creeping round. Its course was towards the left side, and when Mr. Gladstone resumed his seat after an energetic speech that had encroached far upon the second hour, his black necktie would be found ominously knotted under his left ear.

A ticklish Argument.

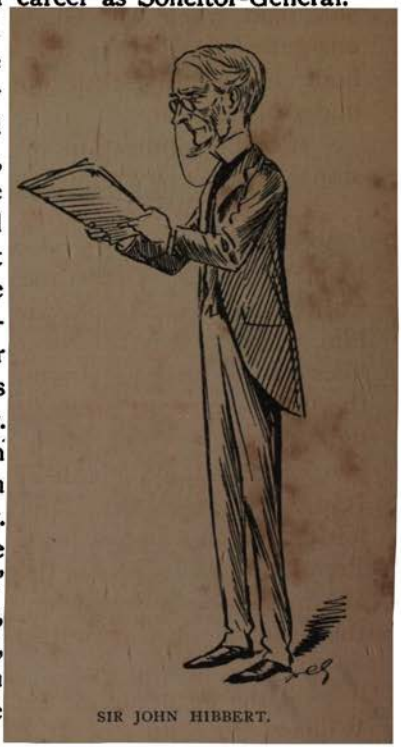
A certain indication of a great speech from Mr. Gladstone, whether as Premier or Leader of the Opposition, was the appearance of a flower in his buttonhole —usually the white flower appropriate to a blameless life. One time during a stormy epoch in the Parliament of 1880-85, the loving hand which thus decked him when he went forth to war selected a tall spray of lilies of the valley. As the Premier warmed to his speech, the little bouquet became dislodged. The spiky leaf was uplifted till it was high enough to touch the orator's jaw as he turned his head towards the Speaker's Chair. It was a serious time, and the speech was struck on the loftiest note. But it was irresistibly comical to see the Premier, absorbed in his theme, mechanically brushing away an imaginary fly whenever the motion of his head brought the tip of the leaf in contact with his cheek.

Stars and Garters.

On the formation of the present Government it was Sir William Harcourt's boast that when he and his colleagues sat in array on the Treasury Bench in the House of Commons, they possessed the unique distinction of not having amongst them a single ribbon or a solitary star. Early last year the spell was broken by the creation of a Knight Commandership of the Bath. The ribbon was flung around the most modest and retiring figure on the Bench, and people did not notice or, having seen, forgot it. During the present year the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been known to repeat the proud boast, forgetful that Sir John Hibbert is K.C.B.

Even with that exception the commonalty on the Treasury Bench is highly distinguished as compared with many strata of predecessors. Sir William Harcourt himself

has a handle to his name, but that was the inevitable corollary of his exceedingly brief career as Solicitor-General. Sir Walter Foster was created a baronet, whilst to Sir George Trevelyan and Sir Edward Grey baronetcies, like reading and writing in Dogberry's time, come by nature. There are also the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General, who must needs be knights. With these exceptions, men who are practically the fountain of honour are chary about sprinkling its waters upon themselves. Mr. Gladstone undoubtedly did much to maintain a lofty tradition founded by Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox. I suppose he has made more marquises, dukes, and a' that, not to mention bishops, baronets, deans, and knights, than any statesman of modern times. Yet to the end of the chapter he remains plain "Mr."



SIR JOHN HIBBERT.

Mr. Disraeli was not able to withstand the glittering lure of a coronet. The temptation to transmute into actual life the Lord Beaconsfield of his early novel was, apart from other considerations, irresistible. But there was one other high tradition of English public life which the statesman whom his own political party at one time derided as an adventurer passed onward unstained. Master at various epochs of State secrets that might have been transmuted into fabulous wealth, Disraeli never was a rich man. His chief sustenance, not counting what came to him with his wife, was the fruits of hard labour.

Lord Beaconsfield.

This state of things is happily so much a matter of course in English political life, that it seems almost an

insult to comment upon its unbroken record. It is, nevertheless, a striking fact which, more especially when contrasted with wholesale charges and allegations made against public men in a neighbouring country, is something to be proud of.

A Point of Honour.

There is no doubt that, regarded from the point of view of pecuniary recompense, the service of the richest State in the world is poorly paid. It would not be difficult to add up the amount Mr. Gladstone has received in the way of salary through his more than sixty years' service to the State. Compared with the wage his supreme genius would have earned had it been directed in any other channel, the aggregate is pitiful in amount. Unlike Mr. Disraeli, Mr. Gladstone never accepted the pension available for ex-Ministers who care to make the declaration that would yield them the possession. Neither for himself nor his family has he been inclined to accept a penny more than was actually due to him in the shape of wages for work done. With all the fat places of the Church at his disposal, his son lives contentedly in the family parsonage, whilst his daughter married a curate, who, as far as the Premier was concerned, received no preferment. When he was returned to office in 1880, at the head of an overwhelming majority, with the Ministerial offices at his absolute command, he appointed his son, Herbert, his private secretary, the special arrangement being made that no salary should be attached to the office. It was not till Mr. Gladstone had retired from active participation in Ministerial affairs that the member for West Leeds received due recognition of long, arduous, and distinguished services to the Liberal Party, being made First Commissioner of Works.

HERBERT.

It is generally supposed that it is only ex-members of

the Cabinet who may benefit by the Political Offices Pensions Act of 1869. The pensioners are in nearly every case ex-Cabinet Ministers, but the rule is not inexorable. One of the earliest pensioners, a gentleman who for nearly twenty-four years has been drawing a yearly income out of the coffers of a grateful nation, is Mr. Headlam, who represented Newcastle-upon-Tyne for over a quarter of a century. He was Judge-Advocate-General from 1859 to 1866, acting also as Secretary to the Treasury for a year in the closing period of his office. These are services which, probably, in this less sentimental age, would scarcely be regarded as warranting a pension. Mr. Headlam had the good fortune to make his application in 1870.

Political Pensioners.

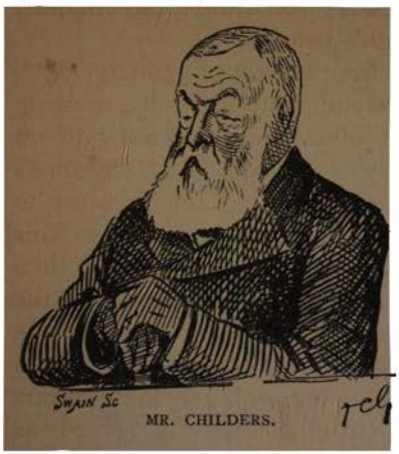
The oldest pensioner is Mr. C. P. Villiers, Father of the House of Commons, who entered it as member for Wolverhampton in the year 1835, and still sits for the borough. It would be too much to say that the Political Offices Pensions Act was created for the benefit of Mr. Villiers. But it is true that within a few weeks of the Act being added to the Statute Book a pension was granted to the member for Wolverhampton, then of the comparatively juvenile age of sixty-seven. Like Mr. Headlam, Mr. Villiers held the office of Judge-Advocate-General, being in a subsequent Ministry promoted to the Presidency of the Board of Trade, which he held from 1859 to Midsummer 1866.

The oldest Pensioner.

No place was made for him in the Ministry of 1868, but Mr. Gladstone, careful for the welfare of former colleagues, passed the Political Offices Pensions Act even amid the herculean labour of dealing with the Irish Church, and gave his old friend the benefit of its earliest dispensation. As sometimes happens to annuitants, Mr. Villiers still lives on to green old age. Up to last Session he was vigorous enough to come down at the crack of the Tory whip to vote against his old chief and his old party. During the present Session he has been paired with Mr. Gladstone, their united ages being 177.

Mr. Childers comes next on the roll of honour, his

pension dating back to October 1881. At least he had the claim of incessant work in a high position, under which his health broke down. He held in succession the offices of First Lord of the Admiralty, Secretary of State for War, and Chancellor of the Exchequer. For many years Mr. Shaw-Lefevre drew the pension, resigning it when his private circumstances no longer justified the declaration which must be made before the pension is assigned.


MR. CHILDERS.

Younger Pensioners.

When what Mr. Chamberlain in unregenerate days called the Stop-Gap Government came into office in 1885, one of its earliest acts was to make provision for two of its most esteemed members. On the 6th of July in that year Parliament re-assembled, after adjournment for the election of new Ministers. Four days later the names of Lord John Manners and Sir Stafford Northcote were added to the Pension List. Lord Iddesleigh lived only eighteen months to enjoy the well-earned recognition of a useful and unselfish life. Lord John Manners, succeeding to the Dukedom of Rutland, resigned his pension in March 1888. A few days later it was bestowed upon Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who still

DUKE OF RUTLAND.

retains it. In 1892 Lord George Hamilton found himself in a position to make the necessary declaration, and obtained the reversion of Lord Iddesleigh's pension.

Lord Cross's pension dates from the 1st of January 1877. As he was at that time Secretary of State for India, drawing a salary of £5000 a year, he of course would not add on the pension. He was simply, to adapt Mr. Thwaites's imagery quoted on an earlier page, getting the Treasury to lay for him an egg which he put by for a rainy day. This came with the General Election of 1892, and since then Lord Cross has drawn his pension. The last name on the list, though not in point of date, is that of Lord Emly, whose pension dated from Midsummer Day 1886. His claim rested on the fact that as Mr. Monsell, for many years member for County Limerick, he successively served as Secretary to the Board of Trade, Under-Secretary for the Colonies, and Postmaster-General.

In this connection it is interesting, summing up the list, to find that, as between ex-members of Liberal Cabinets and ex-Conservative Cabinet Ministers, the proportion stands as one to three — Mr. Childers against Lord Cross, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, and Lord George Hamilton.

CHAPTER XVII

AUGUST

THE British workman who insists upon the limit of an eight hours' day might usefully meditate on the particulars and extent of a day's work of one of Her Majesty's Ministers when the House of Commons is in Session. He appears in his place—and in the Parliamentary reports—at half-past three in the afternoon, when public business commences.[1] He will have an average of a dozen questions to reply to, each involving more or less research and consideration. Afterwards he may take a leading part in debate on the question of the hour. In these days, happily, business in the House of Commons usually terminates on the stroke of midnight. But at best there is necessitated close attendance for eight hours and a half upon work of the most exigent character, carried on in the fierce light that beats on the Treasury Bench.

A Day's Work.

Yet the actual House of Commons work is merely the supplement of what has already amounted to far more than an ordinary day's task. The other day a Minister casually mentioned to me, rather with an air of satisfaction than of complaint, how he had spent the last twenty-four hours. After breakfast, following upon a late sitting of the House (the twelve o'clock rule having been suspended), he went to his office and spent a couple of hours in transacting the business of one of the most important departments of

[1] Since 1902 the Speaker has taken the Chair at 2 o'clock.

the State. Thence he proceeded to a Committee-room of the House of Commons, where, at noon, he took the chair, and conducted the cross-examination of three experts giving evidence upon an intricate case of inquiry remitted to a Select Committee. At half-past three he was on the Treasury Bench and answered eleven questions, not to count others "arising out of the answer just made." As soon as questions were over, he moved the second reading of one of the principal measures of the Government programme, explaining a scheme of infinite detail affecting national interests and bristling with controversial points. Thereafter, till midnight approached, he sat attentively listening to and noting a long succession of speeches offering criticisms on the measure. At twenty minutes past eleven he rose and replied on the whole debate, concluding his speech in time to suffer the disappointment of seeing the debate adjourned.

This is pretty rough on a man. But perhaps the hardest thing to bear is the necessity imposed upon a Minister of dining at the House of Commons every night the House is in Session. Not for him the bright social feasts which make merry the London season. More especially at the present epoch, when parties are evenly balanced, the duty of being present for every division weighs with more than usual heaviness on a Minister.

"In Prison often."

Even in times of less strenuous strife it is considered bad form for a Minister to show himself in the House of Commons in dinner dress. Oddly enough, variation to this rule was in recent years made by Mr. Gladstone, who during the last few Sessions of active Parliamentary life was a habitual diner-out. Even when the Home Rule Bill of last Session was in Committee, he would leave the House just before eight o'clock, dress with the rapidity of what in theatrical parlance is known as a quick-change artist, dine out, and be back again soon after ten o'clock, ready, if necessity called (and sometimes when it didn't), to make a big speech.

It was only an octogenarian of Mr. Gladstone's vitality

that could thus burn the candle at both ends. I knew Mr. Disraeli in the House of Commons through the last years of his Premiership, and do not recall a single occasion when he appeared in evening dress. He did not habitually dine in the House, but went off at regular hours, and after a moderate interval returned, to remain at his post till the principal order of the day was disposed of, an event which, in his time, was not accomplished on the stroke of midnight. But he was always in morning dress, and none of his colleagues ventured to vary the fashion on the Treasury Bench.

Mr. Disraeli.

In the Parliaments following the General Election of 1886 Mr. Gladstone became a regular diner-out. Through the Parliament of 1880-85 he dined at home, in morning dress, and used to astonish the House with the brevity of the time he found sufficient to drive to Downing Street, swallow his dinner, and be back on the Treasury Bench. The present Leader of the House of Commons (Sir William Harcourt) dines regularly in the House, in which respect he resembles the late Mr. W. H. Smith. Mr. Smith dined every night in his own room, covers being laid for four or six, according to invitations issued to his colleagues, or to occasional guests from the back Ministerial benches.

"MEASURABLE DISTANCE."

The Speaker is within measurable distance of his own dining-table. But his opportunities for enjoying an evening meal are strictly and sorely limited. Half an hour

The Speaker's "Chop."

is the period during which proceedings in the House of Commons are suspended so that the Speaker may take what is known as "his chop."

That the meal should be thus designated is a practice of long standing. It certainly goes back as far as the time of Fergus O'Connor, who was member for Cork from 1832 to 1835, sitting for Nottingham from 1847 to 1852. Towards the close of his career Mr. O'Connor displayed signs of eccentricity that filled his friends with concern. According to an old House of Commons' tradition, difficult to trace to a reliable source, the Chartist leader was left unrestrained, till one day, so the story runs, "he went behind the chair and ate the Speaker's chop."

There is a looseness of reference to locality which throws doubt on this record. It seems to imply that the Speaker's evening meal was spread on a table at the back of the chair; that the member for Nottingham accidentally passing by, attracted by a savoury smell, lifted the cover from the dish, and, finding a chop there, straightway sat down and ate it. Forty years ago, as now, the Speaker had his residence within the precincts of Westminster, and would take his chop in his own dining-room, where no stray members of Parliament of tottering intellect would be admitted. I mention the story only as showing that the tradition which particularises the Speaker's evening meal as a chop is of respectable antiquity.

"I DON'T WANT TO SIT THERE."

The Terrace Room.

Whilst Ministers who have their private rooms may and often do have their dinners sent in from the common kitchen, it is more usual to use one of the dining-rooms, where a table is reserved. Private members may secure tables, or places

at tables, by giving due notice. There is a room known as the Terrace Room that may be engaged for dinners of which strangers may partake, and where, after dinner, smoking is permitted. It is in great request through the season, and that accommodation should be limited to its use is one of the curiosities of Parliamentary social life. There is another and larger room where members may entertain ladies at dinner. But the whole accommodation to meet the stern necessity of dining in the House of Commons is lamentably inadequate.

ONE OF THE KITCHEN COMMITTEE.

Up to a period dating back some ten years the commissariat of the House of Commons was in the hands of an outside purveyor. He retired, it is said, with a considerable fortune. Whereupon it was decided that members should undertake the direction of their kitchen affairs on the principle of club management. A Kitchen Committee was formed, and is appointed every Session, with others of far less importance. Up to the present time the Committee has not been more fortunate than was the professional purveyor in realising the ideal of the ordinary member of a decent dinner at a fair price. This is certainly not due to the fact that they are making a large profit out of the undertaking. On the contrary, were it not for a subsidy of a thousand a year forthcoming from the public purse, the balance-sheet of the commissariat department of the House of Commons would last year have been on the wrong side by the sum of £993, 5s. 7d.

The Kitchen Committee.

It would seem at first sight that the contract for feeding the House of Commons is a sure way to wealth. The advantages pertaining to the undertaking are extensive and peculiar.

There is no rent to pay; gas and firing are free; glass, crockery, knives and forks and table-linen are thrown in. Finally there is the subsidy of £1000 a year—all this in addition to the monopoly of feeding for six or seven months in the year 670 gentlemen.

The difficulty arises from the uncertainty attending sittings of the House. The cooks may prepare broth, with things to follow, for two or three hundred legislators. The House may forthwith be counted out, and not half a dozen remain for dinner. On the other hand, as happened last Session, the House may unexpectedly sit all night, and the larder may be picked absolutely clean before one o'clock in the morning. These are extreme cases; but they are conditions that must be met, and are faced according to existing arrangements by what would appear to be absolutely the worst device. The conditions of the House of Commons are precisely those which test most severely the resources of a private and exclusive commissariat department. They are, moreover, exactly those that would be best controlled by an independent outside organisation which, at touch with the hungry public at various points, would never be embarrassed by having suddenly and unexpectedly thrown on its hands material for dinner not wanted by the House of Commons on a particular night.

The Secret of Failure.

A gentleman closely connected with the Kitchen Committee told me with tears in his eyes that the Irish members are at the root of the undoubted failure of the House of Commons' kitchen.

"An Irish member," he said, "will insist when he is helped to chicken upon having the wing served to him —by choice, the liver-wing. Now, there are a hundred and three Irish members, eighty of whom pretty regularly dine in the House when they are in attendance on their Parliamentary duties. When you come to serving out eighty chicken wings, you will see that what is left for the mere British is of a monotonously inferior description, sure to lead to heart-burning and reproaches. *Toujours* drumstick unhinges a man's mind, and leads to a

state of things in which complaint is common and dissatisfaction rife."

There may be something in this. Obviously it does not cover the whole ground of dissatisfaction with House of Commons' dinners.

This Session the Kitchen Committee, pertinaciously pursued by Mr. Alpheus Cleophas Morton, coyly put forward a balance-sheet setting forth their expenditure and receipts. This shows that there was taken over the counter a sum exceeding £17,000. That would be above the average of ordinary Sessions, since the accounts are those of the year 1893, when there was a winter Session.

The Kitchen Balance-sheet.

The sales are somewhat arbitrarily grouped, "cigars and provisions" being bracketed as realising £10,498, whilst "wines, spirits, mineral waters, etc.," bring in £6519. What the "etc." may stand for remains a matter for conjecture. Presumably it has something to do with cheese, for on the other side of the ledger there is a sum of £983 paid for "cheese, etc."

The largest item in the kitchen account is for wines and spirits, which tot up to the precise sum of £3985, 11s. 11d. This, with an addition of £532 for beer and £422 for mineral waters, shows that the House of Commons is a pretty thirsty place. A stock of cigars to the tune of £567 was laid in. The butcher's bill is a trifle over £3000. Fish stands at £941; poultry and game at £761, within 40s. of the amount spent for vegetables. Bread and biscuits cost £360, and groceries £628. This last item is concerned with those tea-parties on the terrace, which through the summer of last year formed one of the most popular features of a brilliant season. Wages and management sum up to close upon £4000, and last of all in the ledger comes the modest line: "Net profit, £6, 14s. 5d."

This profit, as has been shown, would have been swallowed up and a dire deficit substituted but for the £1000 which the House in its own relief votes from the national coffers.

This is not, as it stands, a particularly flourishing balance-sheet. It would be interesting to have a few

remarks upon it from an expert engaged in one of the big hotels or large clubs. It would not greatly matter if the result were satisfactory, and the House of Commons' dinner were in any reasonable degree delectable. That such is not the case is a fact painfully notorious. In debate on the subject which took place in June, not a single good word was said for cook or Committee. Mr. Chamberlain, speaking elsewhere about the same time, humorously contemplating the prospect of prison fare, said he could face it with equanimity, since he was accustomed to dine in the House of Commons. The gibe is cruel, but not nearly so cruel as the fate imposed upon Ministers and other members compelled or accustomed to dine regularly at the House. It is hard and unjust upon the Committee, who devote much time and thought to the business, getting, by way of recompense, kicks unrelieved by the gleam of halfpence. That they know nothing about the business, have neither natural aptitude nor experience gained elsewhere, is not their fault. What is wrong with the business is that it is entirely bad, founded upon a system hopelessly inapplicable to the situation.

The Moral of it.

It seems a bitter satire that the House of Commons can supervise the affairs of the universe and cannot serve itself with a comfortable dinner at a moderate price.

The temporary withdrawal of Colonel Saunderson from the political arena has done something to eclipse the gaiety of the House of Commons. At this present time of writing, the Colonel, who last Session was usually in front of the fight, whether with tongue or fists, has made but a solitary appearance. That was in the earliest days of the Session, when the Address was still under consideration. Mr. Labouchere having carried an amendment which the Government could not accept, it became necessary to begin all over again. A fresh Address was brought in. Sir William Harcourt had risen to move it. Mr. John Morley, with nothing more striking in his dress than the familiar red necktie tied in sailor's knot, was

Colonel Saunderson.

waiting to second it, when Colonel Saunderson interposed, and gravely suggested that the House should adjourn, so as to give opportunity to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to retire to his room, and before he moved the Address "array himself in uniform suitable to his rank."

Having fired this shot, the Colonel disappeared from the field in which he was wont to fill a prominent part, and every one will be sorry to know that the limitation of his public duties is occasioned by failing health.

COLONEL SAUNDERSON.

Whilst the Colonel was still in constant residence in his house in Sloane Street, he was the victim of an outrage sufficient to shatter nerves of less tempered steel. One morning during the height of the controversy round the Home Rule Bill, he was seated in his study preparing a few impromptus to brighten up a speech against Mr. Gladstone's Bill. Raising his eyes from the manuscript in pursuit of an idea, they fell upon a snake stealthily making its way across the floor in the direction of the statesman's chair. The Colonel is not to be trifled with, even by a snake. He was on his feet in a moment, and after brief exertion the snake stretched its long length, dead on the floor.

A new Outrage.

This incursion seemed a development of Home Rule tendencies passing all bounds. It was enough to have unhappy Ireland scared by dynamite explosions, shocked by the houghing of cattle, and the slaughtering of successors on homesteads of evicted tenants. But that a prominent member of a party opposed to Nationalist feeling should have the study of his London house infested with deadly reptiles seemed to be going too far.

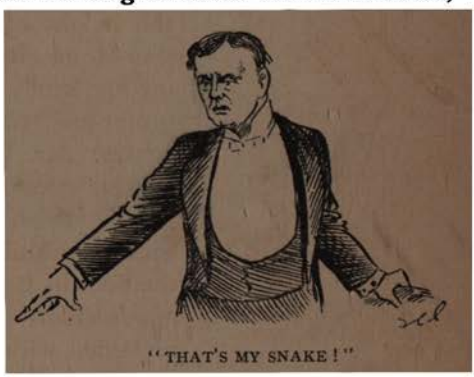
Colonel Saunderson is a practical man. He lamented

this fresh development of internecine animosity. But he put the snake in a bottle of spirits, and placed it on a shelf to await further development of the mystery.

This was not long coming, being brought about in a manner equal to the dramatic discovery of the direful snake. Dining one evening in Stratton Street, Colonel Saunderson told this latest, and abnormally true, snake story. Amongst the guests at table was a popular actor[1] accustomed to thrill London audiences in various dark disguises and multiform desperate situations. Never in his most inspired moments had his voice possessed such blood-curdling thrill, or his gestures more command, than now when he smote the table and cried aloud—

"Why, that's my snake!"

Explanations were forthcoming that established the fact. The Colonel and the actor are neighbours in the same street, divided by a house and a long strip of garden. Amongst the cherished members of the family circle in the actor's home was a spotted snake. One day it disappeared, the most persistent and passionate inquiries failing to discover its place of retirement. Now the whole secret was out. The snake had climbed the wall, crossed the intervening garden, made another ascent, dropped into Colonel Saunderson's garden, and, finding the study window open, had made itself at home in new quarters.



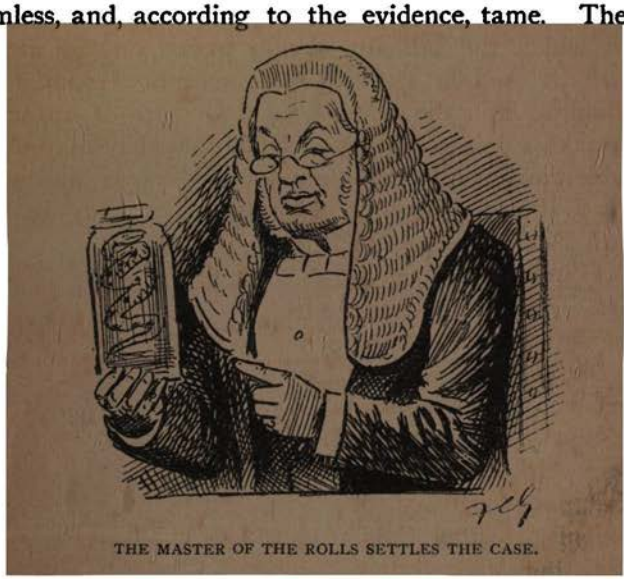
"THAT'S MY SNAKE!"

There now arose fresh complication. To whom did the body of the defunct snake belong? The actor claimed it as his; Colonel Saunderson insisted that the laws of sport gave it to him. He had hunted it, slain it, and, moreover, put it in pickle.

"Oh! most righteous Judge."

[1] Mr. Beerbohm Tree.

Fortunately there was present at the dinner-table a judge whose opinion deservedly carries supreme weight. Appealed to to decide, he delivered an interesting and important judgment. Suppose, he said in effect, the reptile had been of the rattlesnake breed, or even a *trigonocephalus tisiphone*, it would, coming within the category of a wild animal, have been the property of the man who killed it. It was apparently a *coluber constrictor*, naturally harmless, and, according to the evidence, tame. Therefore



THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS SETTLES THE CASE.

it was the property of its original owner, and must be returned to him. But—and it was here Lord Esher's famed subtlety in regard to the niceties of crowner's quest law came in—the spirits in which the snake had been preserved belonged to Colonel Saunderson, and no portion of them, even though absorbed in the skin of the reptile, might be abstracted and retained by the rightful owner of the snake.

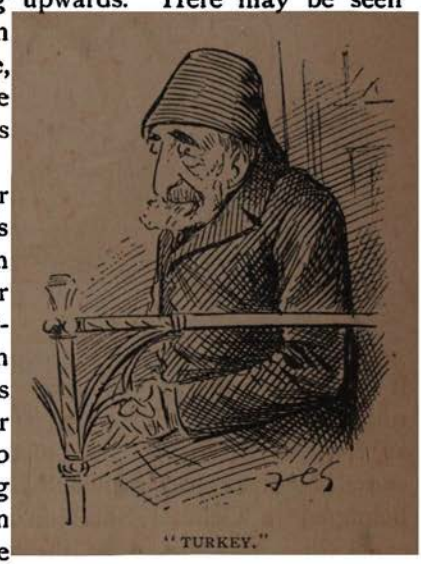
There the matter was left, and there it rests, as does the body of the snake in the bottle of brandy.

In the matter of official or Ministerial spectacles London lags behind some of the other capitals of Europe. There is,

however, one occasion when this sort of thing is done as well in London as it used to be in Paris in the days of the Empire, and is to-day in Berlin or St. Petersburg. It is the reception given at the Foreign Office on the Queen's birthday.

Birthday Night at the Foreign Office.

All the circumstances and surroundings contribute to success. The Foreign Office is one of the few public buildings suitable for the gathering. Its spacious staircase, not too far-reaching nor steep of access, serves as a conduit through which the brilliant stream passes on the way to spread itself out in the spacious reception-room. For more than an hour the staircase is the centre of attraction. Guests make a point of going early, so that they may obtain favourable positions on the landing to look over, and watch the crowd slowly struggling upwards. Here may be seen nearly all Britons famous in Politics, Literature, Science, and Art. Later, when the theatres are closed, comes on the Drama.



"TURKEY."

The faces are familiar enough, but the apparel is often rare. It is the custom on the Queen's birthday for some of the principal Cabinet Ministers to entertain their colleagues and others at full-dress dinners. After dinner all ways lead to Downing Street, converging on the staircase of the Foreign Office. Apart from the Ministerial dinners, every man who owns a uniform of any kind or a Court suit puts it on. Ribbons of all the Orders known to European Courts lend added colour to the scene. Stars and Orders flash on manly breasts. Every State in the world is represented by its Minister, in uniform or, in the case of the emissary of the Emperor of China, in national

dress. Amid the crowd of bared heads Rustem Pasha wears his fez, and on this year's Birthday Count de Staal invested Russia with more than usual distinction by wearing a pair of ivory-coloured pantaloons—"mystic, white samite."

It is on occasion like this that one feels what a blow was dealt at the not too lavish decoration of London by the pressure of economic considerations which led to the withdrawal of the Greek Minister. At Foreign Office parties, M. Gennadius, the exceedingly clever diplomatist who long represented the King of Greece at the Court of St. James's, was a thing of beauty and remains a joy for ever. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like the Greek Minister. Cloth of gold was the material out of which his cunningly-constructed raiment was devised. There was, perhaps, more gold than cloth. As far as peeps were permitted of the material beneath the heavy braid of gold, the coat was blue, the trousers white. By his side dangled a heavily-jewelled scimitar. Essentially a man of peace, M. Gennadius, with the instinct of a diplomatist, seized the opportunity of showing what Greece would look like if, owing to difficulties on the currant import duty or other vexed question, it was compelled to go to war.

A vanished Figure.

"HAYTI."

In the absence of this picturesque figure, the Diplomatic circle this year supplied another striking personality of quite a different style. His round, full face was black as night. His head was covered with material which, in the case of Uncle Ned before he laid down the shovel and the hoe, was shortly described as "wool." He wore a uniform that was a happy compromise between the garb of a general, an admiral, and a bandmaster. A lady inquiring of a young but highly esteemed personage at the Foreign Office who the

"Mr. Johnson" of Piccadilly.

stranger was, was told it was "Mr. Johnson of the Christy Minstrels."

This flippancy received apparent confirmation from a cheerful habit indulged in by the foreign guest of audibly humming a tune as he surveyed the ever-changing crowd. It seemed possible that at any moment after this preparatory exercise he might break forth into the ordered harmony of "O! dem golden slippers," or "'Way down upon de Swanny River." The distinguished stranger was, however, none other than the emissary of the Republic of Hayti at the Court of the Queen of England and Empress of India.

A Tragedy of Buttons.

A Minister[1] I met at the birthday party told me he never re-entered the Foreign Office on these occasions without melancholy reflections on his earliest experience. It happened that his appointment to Ministerial office exactly coincided with opportunity to appear at the birthday party, for the first time in Ministerial uniform. There was not much time to spare for preparation. But the tailor faithfully promised that the uniform should be delivered for the eventful occasion. The parcel had not arrived by dinner-time on the appointed day, and things began to look gloomy. The Minister waited on in hope, reflecting that if it came to the worst he might go in ordinary evening clothes. Still, on such an occasion he would like to wear the unwonted uniform.

Just as he had given up hope and was mournfully surveying his modest claw-hammer coat, a messenger arrived from the tailor with the precious bundle. The Minister hastily but satisfactorily dressed, and got to the Foreign Office in such good time that he was able to make his way up the comparatively uncrowded staircase considerably under a quarter of an hour.

As he walked about the reception-room he was conscious of being an object of marked attention. That was not unexpected—was indeed, as he felt, his due. He was a new and, he hoped, a popular Minister, wearing for the first time a novel and, he had reason to believe, a becoming

[1] The late Wm. Woodall, Financial Secretary for War.

uniform. Still, it was odd that every one should turn round to look at him, and he was uncomfortably conscious of a smile broadening as he passed along.

"My dear fellow," said a colleague, gently taking his arm and leading him to a recess, "for goodness' sake let me take these bits of paper off the buttons at the back of your coat."

The wretched tailor, in sending the coat home, had omitted to remove the bits of soft paper that guarded the gilt buttons from harm. The hapless Minister, hurriedly dressing, had not noted the carelessness, and for nearly an hour had strutted through the brilliant scene thus curiously adorned.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

SESSION 1895

CHAPTER XVIII

JANUARY

FEW things are more notable in recent Parliamentary history than the failure of the Closure. When it was introduced by a Conservative Government, even those who found it convenient to criticise it as an infringement of the liberty of debate secretly recognised in it a beneficent instrument for forwarding business, public and private. Mr. W. H. Smith took to its use with remarkable avidity. During his leadership, more especially in its earlier Sessions, he was, as Mr. Tim Healy irreverently put it, ever "on the pounce." The House soon grew familiar with the figure of its esteemed Leader sitting forward on the extreme edge of the Treasury Bench, with hands on his knees, his eye resting anxiously on the face of the Speaker or the Chairman of Committees. He waited thus till a moment favourable for interposing presented itself. Then, rising, he said, in a voice hardly raised

The Closure.

"ON THE POUNCE."

above reverential whisper, "I move that the question be now put."

Sometimes, not often, the Speaker refused to put the question. Whereat there were triumphant shouts of derision from the Irish camp. Mr. Smith's white teeth gleamed in responsive though spasmodic merriment, and he subsided for another hour. Then he was up again, unabashed by earlier rebuff, and, like the importunate widow in Scripture, he finally succeeded in bringing a particular episode to a conclusion.

With the return to power of a Liberal Ministry matters in this respect have distinctly changed. The horror of the Constitutional party at the proposal to apply the Closure is so genuine and so passionate that the present occupants of the Treasury Bench shrink from exciting it save under the greatest provocation. For good Conservatives, what was with Mr. W. H. Smith not even a choleric word is with Sir William Harcourt flat blasphemy. Moreover, some members on the Liberal side maintain whilst their friends are in office objection to the Closure they expressed when in Opposition. There are two or three sitting below the gangway on the Ministerial side who walk out without voting when a division on the Closure is challenged.

"WALKING OUT."

As far as I remember, Mr. Gladstone, whilst Leader of the House, moved the Closure only once, and that in circumstances of undisguised obstruction. Sir William Harcourt is not enamoured of the practice, and postpones its adoption as long as possible. Last Session the Closure was moved only thirty-six times, and of that number the Leader of the House was responsible for only six applications. Mr.

John Morley moved it twice; Mr. Shaw-Lefevre and Mr. Herbert Gardner, in charge of Bills, severally on single occasions invoking the assistance of the Standing Order. Thus in the aggregate Ministers only ten times through the Session interfered with the object of bringing discussion to a close.

Of the thirty-six motions, twenty were made whilst the Speaker was in the Chair and sixteen under the presidency of the Chairman of Committees. By a curious coincidence both right hon. gentlemen consented to put the question exactly half as many times as it was pressed upon them. The Speaker put the Closure ten times, and the Chairman of Committees eight. This proportion of consent goes a long way towards accounting for the gradual disuse of the Closure. When a member jumps up to move that the question be now put, and the Speaker declines to submit the proposal, a snub is inflicted the severity of which is not easily got over. For a Minister such a repulse is a serious matter, and right honourable gentlemen on the Treasury Bench invoke the Closure only when they are practically certain that the Speaker or the Chairman is prepared to submit the question.

The Speaker and the Chairman of Committees.

That the President for the time being should be placed in a position of deciding whether the House or the Committee shall have the opportunity of saying it has heard enough of the current debate is the weak point in the scheme which predestined it to failure. This stipulation was a concession to the well-meant objection on the part of an influential minority to take any step that tended to infringe freedom of debate. The duty is imposed upon the Speaker, but that does not lessen his dislike for it, nor incline him to take upon himself more responsibility than he can avoid. It is understood that the system Mr. Peel has laid down for his guidance in this matter is not to submit the Closure as long as there is shown in any quarter of the House a disposition by a minority of respectable dimensions to continue the debate. This being known, or

surmised, the control of events is in the hands of adroit obstruction. It only requires that when one member sits down half a dozen others shall spring up, eager to catch the Speaker's eye, and the hapless Minister in charge of the Bill knows it would be useless for him to move the Closure.

Mr. Mellor has his plan, which is equally effective in minimising the responsibility cast upon the Chair in this matter. The Chairman of Committees is understood to hold the view that if the Leader of the House, or the Minister in charge of a Bill, takes upon himself to move the Closure, the Chairman is bound forthwith to put the question. With private members he may be guided by circumstances. These plans, like Trochu's at the siege of Paris, are admirable in their way. The nett result is that the Closure has practically become a dead letter.

This panacea from which so much was hoped, and which at the outset did passably well, having failed, the authorities are beginning to cast about for some new device. The business of the House of Commons increases every year, and as Session follows Session the inadequateness of the existing forms of procedure is demonstrated. When Mr. Chamberlain's friends were in office, he, going to the point in his usual direct and vigorous fashion, propounded a scheme whereby a certain specified time should be set apart for the discussion of particular stages of Bills, and when that was reached a division should automatically ensue. In Committee on the Irish Home Rule Bill in 1893, and again in Committee on the Budget Bill last Session, this suggestion was adopted by a Liberal Government. In the first case it resulted in the famous free fight on the floor of the House. In the second Mr. Chamberlain and the Opposition generally withdrew in high dudgeon, declaring that they would not even be passive participants in this attack on freedom of debate in the Mother of Parliaments.

What is to be done?

These historical instances are cited to show how difficult is the question. There is all the difference of viewing it from the Opposition Benches and from those on the right

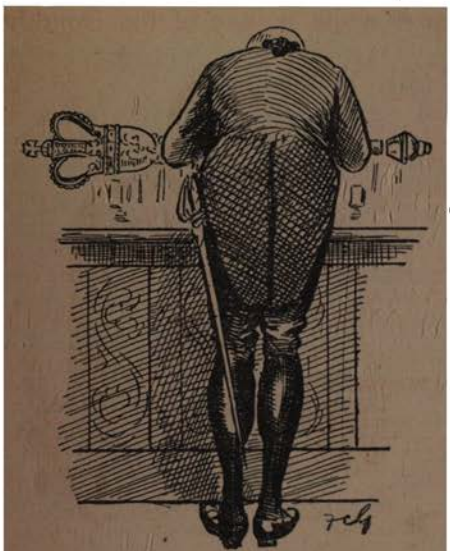
hand of the Speaker. Nevertheless, the difficulty will have to be faced, and, probably, something will be heard at no distant time of a proposition to appoint a Committee representing all sections of Party in the House, which shall consider Government Bills when they are brought in, and decide what number of days shall be set aside for successive stages, the limit fixed by them, in no case, to be overstepped. Another suggestion made is that there shall be a limit to the duration of speeches. This, at least, has the advantage of having been tested in practice, it being the only means by which some of the Congresses, meeting in various parts of the country, get through their work within reasonable time.

Private Business.

There is one eccentricity of Parliamentary procedure that might well be disposed of whilst weightier matters are being further cogitated. In the early days of municipal activity and private industrial enterprise it was found convenient to set aside the first half-hour of sittings of the House of Commons on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, to consider what is known as private business—that is to say, Bills promoted by corporations, public companies, or individuals. As the performance is (or should be) perfunctory, since this class of legislation comes before the House only after it has been thoroughly thrashed out in Select Committee, there were no restrictions as to the date or order in which promoters of private Bills might claim the attention of the House of Commons. A private member in charge of a measure disestablishing a Church, or extending the franchise, is obliged to take his chance at the ballot for opportunity of furthering his object. He may get a favourable position on the Order Book, or may fix on a date so remote as to preclude possibility of his Bill making headway in the current Session. But if the object of the measure he is concerned for be the making of a sewer, the provision of a local water-supply, or the extension of a railway, he is absolutely master of the situation. He can put it down for any day he pleases, and the House of Commons will be

obliged, not only to enter upon its discussion, but to set aside all other business till this local question has been talked out and, if necessary, divided upon.

At present, the Speaker takes the Chair at three o'clock on the four days named. At half-past three public business commences, the intervening space having been devoted to private Bills, should there be any on the Orders. If not, the Speaker sits in the Chair, the Clerks at the table, the Serjeant-at-Arms by the cross-benches, and members hang about waiting for the half-hour to strike. If, on the other hand, the report stage of a private Bill affecting keenly fought interests is down, discussion upon it may go on till five or six o'clock, or even later, public business, meanwhile, being shunted. Last Session the progress of the Budget was more than once seriously hampered by the incursion of a private Bill.



"THE SPEAKER TAKES THE CHAIR."

The existing arrangement was well enough when private business was limited in amount, and the House was content to accept the decision of its own Committee to which it had referred the inquiry, and which had probably spent some weeks in thoroughly sifting the matter. Now that a different order of things is established, it seems preposterous that the tyranny of private business should be permitted to prevail.[1]

Since the House of Lords met at the end of last Session a picturesque presence has vanished. No longer will the

[1] The anomaly was removed by the New Procedure Rules carried in 1902.

gaunt figure of Lord Denman flit about the corridors of the House crowned with a plain-coloured skull cap, carrying in one hand a shabby hat, and in the other a stout stick. I never spoke to Lord Denman, though I was, for a long time previous to his death, the recipient of constant correspondence, written in his schoolboy hand, evidently with a very bad pen.

Lord Denman.

This incomplete personal acquaintance began in odd fashion. Some years ago I wrote in one of the monthly magazines an article on the House of Lords. In the course of passing descriptions of peers, I alluded to Lord Denman as "a harmless, elderly gentleman, something of the Mr. Dick type." This, though not exactly complimentary, was not ill-naturedly meant, and so greatly pleased Lord Denman that he wrote to me saying he had bought up every available copy of the magazine, and sent them to particular friends. One night he took the number down to the House and proposed to read the article, an opportunity of which, I regret to say, their lordships declined to avail themselves.

LORD DENMAN.

Looking over some notes made from time to time with respect to Lord Denman's public appearances, I find one of his many letters. It is a fair sample of the charming incoherency of style which suggested the reference to Mr. Dick. I do not remember what called forth this particular letter, but fancy from the context it refers to an occasion when Lord Denman insisted upon sitting with the Law Lords, actually joining in their delibera-

tions on some important case, and delivering a separate judgment.

"Dear Mr. Lucy," he writes from the Midland Grand Hotel, under date 27th April 1888, "I am glad that your journal states, even with a sneer, that the House of Lords cannot 'even repress me!' In 1884, the day of great Demonstration, the proposer of the Houses of Parliament said the great use of that demonstration would be the power to create Life Peers, and Dr. Carpenter (who died in a bath) and Dr. B. W. Richard should be the first L. P. I wish M.D.'s were made Hereditary Peers, but even Life Peers would find that 'My Lord' is expected to contribute to a great many charities and public objects.

"The 3 Life Peers might be Ld. C. Justices of C. P. in England and Ireland and L. C. Baron in England. There are 8 hereditary Law Lords—2 ex-Chancellors bound to attend—L. Selborne, Herschell, Bramwell, Esher, Coleridge, Moncreiffe, Hobhouse, Halsbury.

"I wish the Committee on Reporting would examine me.—Yours truly, DENMAN.

"Dr. Richardson is a lengthy speaker. Mr. Atkinson, M.P. for Boston, presses his Bill on Duration of Speeches."

The member for Boston alluded to in the postscript is the gentleman later known as Mr. Farmer Atkinson. He was Lord Denman's great political and Parliamentary ally. Whilst he still sat in the Commons, Lord Denman was a frequent visitor to the Lobby, where the twain held long consultations. They struck up an alliance designed by its operations and influence to curb insolent majorities in either House, and to lower the crest of haughty Ministers. Lord Denman's favourite measure—he had quite a batch—was designed to extend the Parliamentary suffrage to women. Mr. Atkinson had drafted a Bill limiting the duration of speeches, a proposal much laughed at; but, as will appear from what is set forth in an earlier page, the member for Boston was

Mr. Farmer Atkinson.

only ahead of his time. Lord Denman undertook, when the Bill had passed the Commons, to pilot it through the Lords, Mr. Atkinson on his part undertaking to carry through the Commons his noble friend's measure on woman's suffrage. As neither passed either House, there was no call to fulfil this mutual pledge. Still, the prospect led to many important and interesting colloquies between the two statesmen, regarded by the party Whips with gallant appearance of amusement.

MR. FARMER ATKINSON.

Lord Denman scores.

The peers had a short way with poor Lord Denman and his efforts to advance his Bills by a stage. Any peer may bring in a Bill, have it read a first time as a matter of course, and printed at the expense of the nation. This Lord Denman did Session after Session with his Woman's Suffrage Bill. But he never got it read a second time. What happened on such occasions was that some noble lord connected with the Government rose and moved that the Bill be read a second time on that day six months. No one showed a disposition to discuss the matter, and in a few moments the Bill was shelved.

Once Lord Denman had the best of this joke. In the Session of 1888, he early in the year brought on his Woman's Suffrage Bill. As usual, it was agreed to read it a second time on that day six months, a formula which confidently implied that when that period was reached Parliament would have been prorogued. It happened in this particular year that the Session was so prolonged that the House of Lords was still sitting six months after Lord Denman had moved

his resolution. He had not forgotten the date, if others had. Upon its occurrence he rose, reminded their lordships that they had unanimously agreed on that very day to read his Bill a second time, and claimed fulfilment of the undertaking. The peers backed out of the situation, leaving Lord Denman with the second reading of his hapless Bill carefully relegated to that day three months, a date when it was more than ever certain the House would not be sitting.

LORD CRANBROOK.

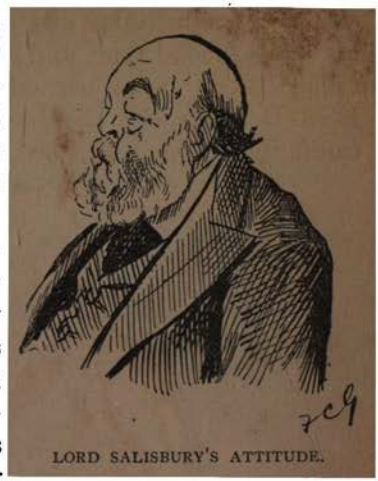
When, next Session, he again brought in the Bill, Lord Cranbrook made the usual motion. Lord Denman, appearing at the table, said: "My Lords, will the noble Viscount state whether, in moving that the second reading shall be taken on this day six months, he means six lunar months or six calendar months?"

There is nothing like being precise, and the few days' difference between an aggregation of six lunar or six calendar months might make all the difference in his chance of finding the House again sitting.

Lord Salisbury when Premier was, perhaps, a little peremptory with a weaker brother. If Lord Denman rose with another peer and declined to give way, Lord Salisbury promptly moved that the other peer be heard. When the Small Holdings Bill of 1892 came on for consideration on third reading, Lord Denman moved its rejection. At the end of ten minutes Lord Salisbury, interposing, declared that his remarks, inaudible on most benches, had no bearing on the Bill before the House. The

Roused.

crushed worm will turn at last. Lord Denman had frequently suffered from the impatience of the Premier. He now turned on Lord Salisbury, and personally rated him for some moments, concluding by striking the table with clenched fist, whilst Lord Salisbury stonily stared into space across the table.



LORD SALISBURY'S ATTITUDE.

Lord Denman was a profound student of Parliamentary precedents, and occasionally flashed one upon the Lords, its novelty disturbing their habitual and well-trained imperturbability. When Mr. Ritchie's Local Government Bill, coming up from the Commons, had been grudgingly passed by their lordships, Lord Denman brought in a Bill for its repeal. This courageous effort met with the customary fate. Its introduction was not refused, and the Bill was printed. But a second reading was curtly refused.

There was supposed to be an end of the matter. But a few nights later Lord Denman came up smiling with another Bill, designed to effect the purpose of the first. He admitted that this course was unusual. But he had found a precedent in the year 1754 connected with an Act for the naturalisation of the Jews. "I have been thirty-four years in this House," he added, parenthetically, "and am entitled to speak in every month except October."

Why October, the peers, being after all human, were curious to know. But they mastered the weakness and sat silent, whilst Lord Denman, raising his musical voice to tones of passionate entreaty, besought them in the name of the liberties of England to read his Bill a first time.

What followed illustrates the difference of habit on the part of the Lords and Commons in dealing with cases like this. Had Lord Denman risen upon such an errand in the

Commons, he would have been greeted with uproarious laughter and cheering, the scene closing by the stern interference of the Speaker. In the Lords he talked on amid perfect silence till he had quite finished. Then the Lord Chancellor, taking no more notice of him than if he had been a blue-bottle fly buzzing round the chandelier, went on with the next business.

His last interposition in the business of the House of Lords was most dramatic. The peers to the number of twenty or thirty were discussing some Bill, the name of which does not dwell in the memory. Suddenly appeared in their midst the tall, gaunt figure of Lord Denman, with skull cap on his head, his left hand clutching a bundle of papers, his right pointing to the Front Bench above the gangway, where ex-Ministers sit.

No Bishops.

"THERE ARE NO BISHOPS PRESENT."

"My Lords," he said, interrupting the peer who was in possession of the House, "there are no Bishops present. I move that this House do now adjourn."

No notice was taken of the interruption, and after a while Lord Denman, gathering up his papers, hurried from the House. Other peers might discuss miscellaneous Bills in the absence of the Bishops. He would not share their responsibility.

Here is a note from Mr. Archibald Forbes, whose knowledge is extensive and peculiar. It relates to a House of Commons' story, told in a former chapter, wherein a Conservative member, living in Whitehall Court, endeavoured

to obtain permission to drive through the Horse Guards archway. According to the smoking-room story, he was told that that was impossible, the privilege being reserved for Royalty and a few highly-placed personages connected with the War Office. But he might be made an Irish peer.

The Irish Peerage.

"The actual story," writes Mr. Forbes, "is of the George III. period. Robert Smith, the banker, and ancestor of the present Lord Carrington, had a house whose back, with the usual garden in front of it, faced the Green Park on its eastern side. He desired to have an entrance into the park from his garden, and petitioned the King to that effect through the proper channel. 'I cannot grant him this privilege,' said old George, 'but I shall be very glad to make him an Irish peer instead.' So Smith became Lord Carrington in the Irish peerage, and a year later received a peerage of U.K."

Mr. William Lincolne sends from Ely a note which seems to settle an important controversy. Was the Brobdingnagian check pattern of Lord Brougham's trousers a figment of the fancy of Mr. *Punch*, or did they actually exist? Says Mr. Lincolne:—

Lord Brougham's Check Trousers.

"Among his lordship's enthusiastic admirers was a Huddersfield manufacturer, who, having turned out a remarkably good shepherd's plaid trousering, sent him a piece with compliments. He had a pair of trousers made from it, and when these were worn out, having the cloth still by him, he just had another pair, and so on to the end of his days. My informant, a friend of thirty-five years' standing, was a Huddersfield man, and what may be still more to the purpose, I saw his lordship wearing a pair during what must have been his last public appearance on a platform at Newcastle some time in the sixties. He was then a mild-mannered, genial old gentleman, and as I listened to his old man's saws, it was hard to believe he could ever have been the fiery advocate of Queen Caroline,

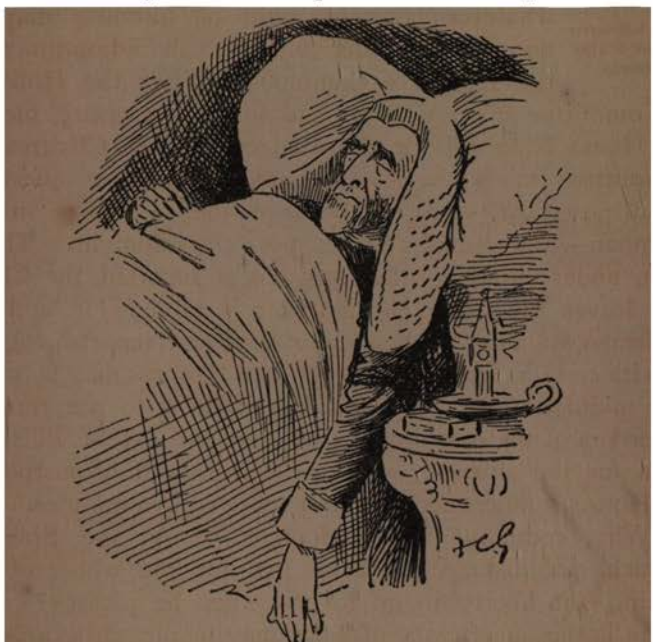
the indomitable Henry Brougham! *Sed quantum mutatus ab illo!* The enormous pattern was just the 'touch of exaggeration essential to success in caricature,' but the basis was shepherd's plaid."

The Adjournment of the House.

It seems a quite unnecessary task to impose upon the over-burdened Speaker the necessity of waiting about to whatever hour of night or morning may be necessary in order to declare the adjournment of the House of Commons. When the House is in Committee upon a large and intricate measure, such as the Home Rule Bill or the Budget Bill, the Chairman of Committees takes the Chair immediately after questions are disposed of—that is, between four and five in the afternoon—and remains at his post till midnight. Thereupon, under existing rules, progress is reported, the Chairman leaves the Chair, the Speaker is brought in, and the Chairman, standing by the steps of the Chair, reports progress. As with certain exceptions no opposed business may be taken after midnight, all the Speaker has to do is to run through the orders of the day (that is, to read the list of Bills put down for the sitting), and, these being severally postponed, the House is adjourned within a space of five minutes.

Why, common persons inquire, should the Speaker, in such circumstances, not be free for the whole of the evening—at liberty to go to bed when he pleases? The reason is the uncertainty of what may momentarily arise in the House of Commons. Not only does the Speaker await the midnight call to proceed to the adjournment, but he does not feel himself at liberty to leave his House all through the long hours the Committee is pegging away under the presidency of the Chairman. The necessity for this hard-and-fast line was demonstrated on the occasion of the great fight on the Closure in Committee on the Home Rule Bill. That sprang up like a whirlwind. Had the Speaker not been within call when a messenger was sent to summon him, a deplorable scene must have reached still lower depths.

As it was, the call was so sudden and the hurry so urgent, that when the Speaker took the Chair he had no definite knowledge of the circumstances that led up to the tumult, a condition of things Mr. Peel, with his customary presence of mind and infinite skill, put to ready use. When members showed a disposition to go back on what had immediately followed upon the interruption of Mr.



SPEAKER PEEL.

Chamberlain's speech, the Speaker said he had no information on the subject, and declined to permit discussion.

That was an exceptional case; but it is an exception which achieves the customary function of proving the rule. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the Speaker might finally retire from the scene when the House resumes Committee on a big Government Bill. On the hundredth his return to the Chair is imperatively needed.

CHAPTER XIX

FEBRUARY

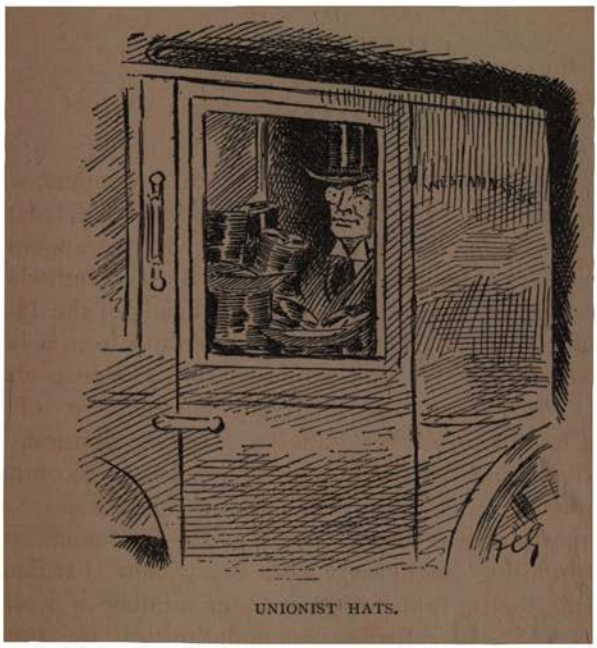
THE Select Committee of the House of Commons, which last year, under the presidency of Mr. Herbert Gladstone, considered whether any and what arrangements might be made to improve the accommodation provided for members and officials of the House, and for the representatives of the Press, shrank from a larger question submitted. It was proposed that evidence should be taken with regard to moderate enlargement of the existing Chamber and its galleries. On a division, this was negatived, and the Committee proceeded to recommend certain tinkering, duly carried out during the recess.

A New House for the Commons.

The question of a new House for the Commons comes up with unfailing regularity with every new Parliament. There is no doubt that, for the greater number of working nights in a Session, the accommodation of the present Chamber is more than ample. It is true that, knowing the Assembly when fully constituted comprises 658 members, a Chamber was deliberately built to seat 306. Beyond this, accommodation is provided in the galleries for an additional 122 members. This is well enough for gentlemen in the front row, but those in the rear can see very little and hear not much. Within the last few years, whilst the number of members has been increased to 670, accommodation for them in the galleries has been considerably reduced by the enlargement of the Press Gallery.

Whilst, even in these conditions, the Chamber is big enough for its ordinary purposes, there are occasions when inexorable limits of space assert themselves. The most recent example of extreme inconvenience arose on the introduction of the Home Rule Bill in the Session of 1892. As early as five in the morning members presented themselves, and by means of visiting-cards or hats allotted particular seats. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, Whip of the

"Pegging-out Claims."



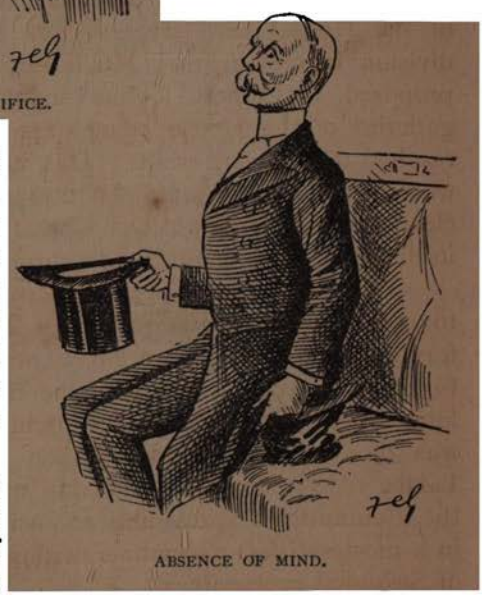
UNIONIST HATS.

Liberal Unionist Party, was reported to have driven into Palace Yard in a four-wheeler filled with second-hand hats, which he arranged on the benches below the gangway, "pegging-out claims" on behalf of his friends. Dr. Tanner, having exhausted all available stock of hats, literally took off his coat, as Mr. Parnell once conditionally promised to do, and attempted to establish a claim for the seat it covered. That, however, went beyond all Parliamentary precedent, and the claim was disallowed. Colonel Saunderson, coming in a little late (though seven o'clock had not

yet sounded from Big Ben), finding a strange hat on his accustomed seat, with rare absence of mind sat down upon it.

A SARTORIAL SACRIFICE.

The general result of the arrangement was so undesirable that at subsequent critical stages of the Bill the Speaker gave orders that the doors of the House were not to be unlocked till noon, a restriction which chiefly had the result of postponing the scrimmage by six or seven hours.



ABSENCE OF MIND.

By way of increasing the accommodation, chairs were brought in and planted in double row down the floor. Not more than twenty could be so disposed of, and what were they among so many, clamorous for seats?

In Palmerston's time.

As far back as 1867, the present Houses of Parliament having then been in occupation for thirty-four years, it was felt that something must be done to improve and, if possible,

enlarge their accommodation. In the debates of the closing years of this the Palmerston Parliament, there will be found many conversations on the subject. One suggestion which met with general favour was that the walls separating the House from the division lobbies which encircle it should be removed and the space added to the Chamber. This attractive proposal was dropped upon discovery that the roof of the Chamber is supported upon the inner walls, and that in order to obtain the space devoted to the lobbies the House would practically have to be rebuilt. Another scheme provided that the walls at either end of the Chamber, under the clock and behind the Speaker's Chair, should be removed. It was estimated that this would provide additional seating accommodation for a hundred persons. Whether they would be able to hear or see is another matter.

The late Sir Thomas Bazley, at the time member for Manchester, fresh from morning service at the Tabernacle, propounded still another scheme. Behind the side galleries of the House there are corridors corresponding with the division lobbies below. Mr. Bazley (not yet Sir Thomas) proposed that these lobbies should be appropriated, the galleries of the House being extended backward till they reached the outward walls. This, he triumphantly affirmed, would give sitting room for 200 more members. It was clear that these might as well be seated within the Tabernacle itself as far as ability to follow current debate was concerned.

A Committee was appointed in 1867 with instructions to consider the whole question. The main result was to formulate a notable plan for a new House of Commons which caught on at the time, but has long rested forgotten in the archives of the House. It was the work of Mr. Barry, son of the architect of the Palace of Westminster, and was unanimously adopted by the Committee as providing an increase of accommodation in a most satisfactory manner, without involving interruption of Sessional proceedings.

Mr. Barry's Plan.

I have before me a copy of the plan, certainly the best and the most practicable of a cloud of suggestions. It implies

nothing more nor less than the erection of a new House in the court adjoining the existing Chamber, known as the Commons' Court. It provides a statelier Chamber than the present, with the usual accessories for division lobbies, corridors, reading-rooms, dining-rooms, smoking-rooms, private rooms for members of the Ministry and officials, and enlarged accommodation for the Press. The new House would seat 569 members, for 419 of whom places would be found on the floor. There would be sitting room for 330 strangers, making a total of 899 persons, increasing the accommodation for members, as compared with the present House by 141 seats, and for strangers by something like 50.

In the present House the average width of each seat is 20⅓ inches. In the new House the width of seat room provided per member would be 20 inches. The shape of the proposed Chamber is octagonal, with four long and four shorter sides. Its dimensions are 67 feet by 63 feet, and as it would be 39 feet high, it would contain 154,300 cubic feet of space. The present Chamber is 68 feet by 44 feet, and is 44 feet high, containing 127,000 cubic feet of space.

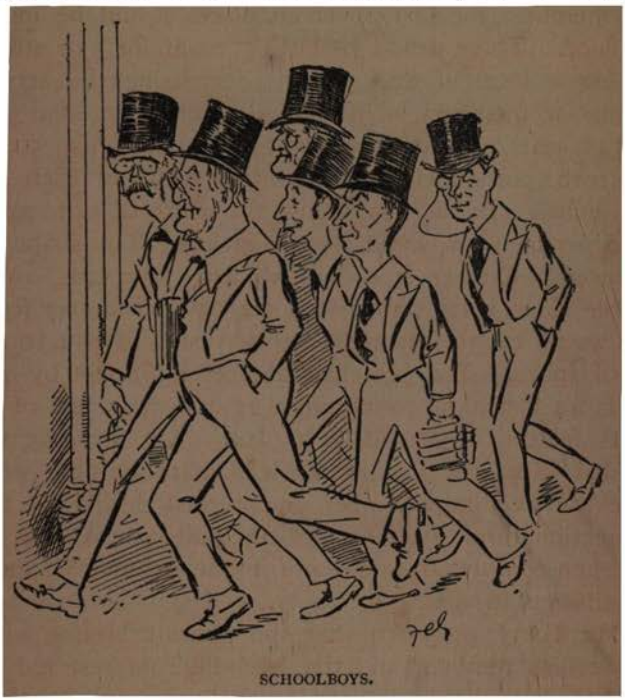
A feature in Mr. Barry's plan which strongly recommended it to the Committee was that not only would it leave the existing Chamber undisturbed during the process of erection, and available for the sittings of the House, but when completed would utilise the present Chamber as a handsome adjunct.

Mr. Barry proposed that the present House, with the glass ceiling removed and the splendid roof restored to the light of day, should be used as an approach to the new House, and as a private lobby for members. Within it would be provided post-office accommodation and rooms for the Whips, Ministerial and Opposition. Amongst other attractive details of the scheme was a refreshment-room for the use alike of Lords and Commons, with a frontage to the river. Mr. Barry, probably with the sanguine temperament constitutional with architects, estimated that the new buildings might be erected at an outlay not exceeding £120,000.

A Select Committee having been specially appointed to

consider the question of a new House for the Commons, and having unanimously recommended a particular scheme, it would seem that the next thing to do was to vote the money and get to work on the building. That is an anticipation that discloses only superficial knowledge of the House of Commons' habitude. Oftener than not the appointment of a Select Committee, or of a Royal

The Old, Old Story.



SCHOOLBOYS.

Commission, is nothing more than a device deliberately to shelve a troublesome question. More than twenty-seven years have passed since this painstaking and prolonged inquiry was concluded. Nothing has in the meantime been done in the way of carrying out its definite, almost peremptory, recommendations. Last Session there was a slight recurrence of the unrest of members in view of their inadequate accommodation. Invariably at the opening of a new Parliament, when the withers of members

are unwrung and they flock down to Westminster with the eagerness of boys admitted to a new playground, there is fresh outcry for a new House. But it dies away as the Session grows older, and the old Chamber, in which Peel sat, Palmerston slept, Disraeli manœuvred, and Gladstone thundered, still serves.

The House of Commons' Steeplechase.

The return to Parliamentary life of Mr. Elliott Lees suggests the possibility of re-establishing the House of Commons' Steeplechases. These were started in the Session of 1889, when, after a memorable race, Mr. Lees, then member for Oldham, rode in first amongst the light weights, repeating his victory in the following year. Mr. Cyril Flower, now Lord Battersea, actually came in first on a horse, understood to have been named "Home Rule." The circumstance that one of the Liberal Whips had ridden past the winning-post on "Home Rule" was regarded at the time by adherents of that policy as a good omen. It turned out that there had been a mistake. It was not "Home Rule," but quite another horse, one disqualified by earlier achievements, which Mr. Flower had ridden. He was accordingly ruled out, and to this day in his Dorset home Mr. Elliott Lees dines under the shadow of the huge silver cup, prize of the House of Commons' Steeplechase, none daring to make him afraid.

MR. ELLIOTT LEES, M.P.

One circumstance calculated to militate against inclination to re-establish this festival is the notable Parliamentary mortality marked in the cases of the riders in this race. Of a dozen whose names I remember, a very small proportion

escaped the perils of the General Election. Only three—Mr. Bromley-Davenport, Mr. Muntz, and Mr. Frank Mildmay—rode in at the memorable struggle at the polls in the autumn of 1892. For the rest, one, Mr. Fitzwilliam, died; Mr. Cyril Flower ascended to the House of Lords, where he now beams as Lord Battersea; Mr. Western Jarvis, the most active promoter and manager of the steeplechase, did not offer himself for re-election at the General Election, an example followed by Mr. Bazley White. Mr. Elliott Lees, Mr. Walter Long, Mr. Hermon-Hodge, Mr. Raymond Heath and Mr. A. Pease were defeated at the poll. Mr. Walter Long got in at a by-election, and Mr. Elliott Lees has now joined him. **Unhorsed.**

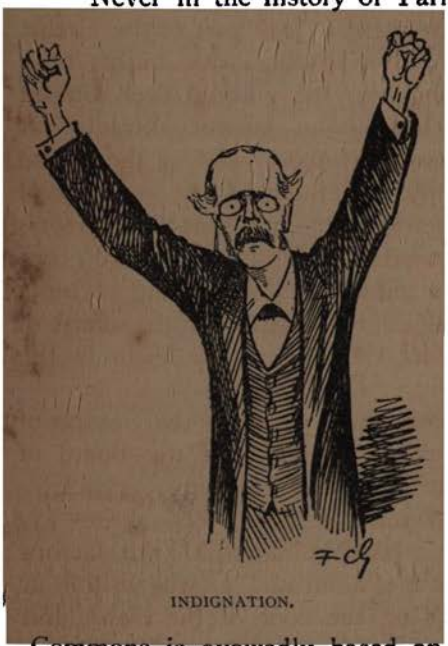
Dick Power never rode in any of the steeplechases which followed each other in regular succession from 1889 to 1892; but he took a keen interest in the proceedings, and at the time his earthly race was all too early closed had missed none of the House of Commons' events. Mr. Alfred Pease won the race in 1891. Mr. Frank Mildmay delighted an honest hunting constituency by winning the cup in 1892, a distinction which, as mentioned, did not at the General Election save his seat on quite another mount.

It is piquant to hear complaints made of the taciturnity of Sir William Harcourt in his capacity of Leader of the House of Commons following upon his placid enjoyment of a hermit recess. The Chancellor of the Exchequer might well retort, in the words of the corporal administering an ordered bout of punishment to a peccant private: "Hit high or hit low, I can't please you." Time was when complaint of his manner on the Opposition Benches was directed against his, alleged, too frequent interposition in debate. Now he is accused of provoking brevity, of contemptuous abstention from participation in debate. Speak much or speak little, he fails to please. **William the Silent.**

It is quite true that Sir William Harcourt's Parliamentary custom of to-day varies in marked manner from what it used to be, even so recently as the Session of 1893. But a

great deal has happened since then. He is now Leader of the House of Commons, responsible for getting its work through. To that end he knows there is no contribution more valuable than habitual flashes of silence. The House of Commons is prone to find the key-note of its passing mood on the Treasury Bench. If the Leader is talkative, it will cheerfully respond. If he is concise, it refrains from garrulity. When, on the final day of July last year, Sir William Harcourt moved the Time Closure with the object of getting the Evicted Tenants Bill through, he, to Mr. Arthur Balfour's measureless amazement, his quite uncontrollable indignation, spoke for only five minutes.

"Never in the history of Parliament," Mr. Balfour, with clenched hands and flashing eyes, cried aloud, "has such a proposal been made in so brief a speech."



INDIGNATION.

That was true; but long before midnight debate was brought to a conclusion, and the extra hour which another leader might have occupied in spinning phrases over a foregone conclusion was utilised to pass the report stage of a batch of Supply.

Mr. Disraeli.

Sir William Harcourt's plan of campaign as Leader of the House of Commons is avowedly based on a study of Mr. Disraeli's manner whilst he occupied the same position. The member for Oxford in the Parliament of 1874 was, in spite of political differences, on terms of personal intimacy with the Conservative chief. They said many good things to each other. One of Disraeli's apothegms falling on attentive

ears lives in practice at this day. "A successful Leader of the House of Commons," said Mr. Disraeli, "should, in degree, order his procedure by the nursery formula for the direction of a child admitted to the company of his elders. He should be seen, but not heard."

That was a principle faithfully carried into practice by its promulgator. He was the most patient and the most constant attendant on the business of the House. However dull might be the proceedings, he was there to watch their course. Hour after hour he sat with arms folded, legs crossed—"Like a Crusader on a tombstone," Beresford-Hope, who did not unreservedly admire him, once spitefully, but *sotto voce*, observed—head bent down, eyes that seemed to sleep, but missed no movement in any part of the House. Whole pages of *Hansard*, covering successive nights of a Session during his leadership, may be glanced over without evidence of his presence beyond an answer extracted at question time. His idea was that the Leader of the House of Commons should occupy something of the position of editor on a well-regulated newspaper. It is that able person's business to get the best possible work out of his staff, confining his own labour to inspiration, direction, and revision. Disraeli, holding his colleagues responsible for the affairs of their several departments, let them speak for them in the House of Commons.

This principle was sorely tried when, in the Session of 1876, Sir Charles Adderley, as President of the Board of Trade, had charge of the Merchant Shipping Bill. Rarely has such a muddle been seen since Parliaments began. It culminated in the famous episode when Mr. Plimsoll broke out and, as was written at the time, stood on one leg on the floor of the House and shook his fist at the Speaker. After that, poor Sir Charles Adderley was obviously impossible. Still, the Premier scrupulously refrained from any overt act of supersession. Sir Stafford Northcote and Sir John Holker, then Attorney-General, were told off to sit, one on either side of him, through the long nights when the Bill was in Committee.

An extreme Case.

With their aid the Bill, wholly transformed, passed through the House, and as soon as possible, having due regard to decency, Sir Charles Adderley was made a peer, with the title of Lord Norton.

LORD NORTON.

It is little wonder that Mr. W. H. Smith, who, regarded as a Minister, was almost literally "brought up by hand" in the Disraeli nursery, should, when he came to be Leader of the House, remember his old master's lessons. Though in no otherwise comparable with Parliamentary giants of his own or other days, Mr. Smith was, undoubtedly, one of the most successful Leaders the House has known. Like Mr. Disraeli, he was always on the spot. If not actually on the Treasury Bench, whence he was rarely missed, he was in his room, within sound of the division bell or call of the messenger. Also like the Master, he appreciated the relative value of speech and silence. Though the Leader of the House may strategically refrain from lengthening debate by interposing speeches in supplement of the Minister in charge of Bill or motion, it is (or was) expected of him that he should wind up the debate. In times when Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Gladstone faced each other across the table, no important debate was concluded till the Leader of the Opposition delivered a set speech, and the Leader of the House had elaborately replied.

Mr. W. H. Smith.

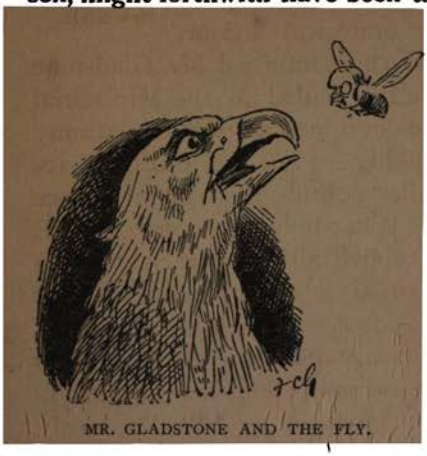
Mr. Smith invariably excused himself from observance of this custom. Mr. Gladstone, as Leader of the Opposition, might fire a parting volley into a passing Bill. The Leader of the House left the duty of replying to the Minister in charge of the measure, he sitting applausive by his side. This habit led to abatement of excitement as compared with

the immediate preparation for an important division in earlier days. But the division took place a little earlier, and the practical result, as far as figures went, was precisely the same.

Mr. Gladstone, whether as Leader of the House or as Leader of the Opposition, differed wholly from the model set up by his long-time rival. So restless was his energy, so minute his knowledge, so boundless his vocabulary, that, even to the last, he found it impossible to abstain from taking the lead in whatever debate went forward. Had Mr. Disraeli, in the process of evolution, found himself Leader of a Government pledged to the Home Rule Bill, and had he a Chief Secretary so capable and enthusiastic as Mr. John Morley, he would have left the direct charge of the Bill to his colleague, holding himself in reserve, as Napoleon was wont to hold the Imperial Guard. It was reported at the opening of the Session of 1893 that, whilst the Premier would personally introduce the Bill, he would thereafter, more especially in Committee, leave its conduct to Mr. Morley. Perhaps, being constitutionally of a sanguine mood, he thought that was possible. When put to the test, he found irresistible the temptation to be ever in his place through Committee, watchful, alert, convincing out of all proportion to necessity, replying to a captious nonentity with as painstaking precision and force of argument as he answered Mr. Balfour or Mr. Goschen. Mr. Gladstone.

In his translation of the *Odes of Horace*, a work completed, I believe, before sunset on the very day he resigned the Premiership, Mr. Gladstone expresses the opinion that "the translation of Horace should carry compression to the farthest practicable point." That is a principle he reserved for the classics and denied to the Commons. Through the prolonged debate on the Home Rule Bill of 1893, as the Premier pounced upon some immaterial person below the gangway and rent his assertion to shreds, one often thought of the eagle catching flies. It was magnificent, but it was not business. Frequently the direct effect of the Premier's interposition was to revive a flagging debate and postpone by an

hour or an evening a division which, had he restrained himself, might forthwith have been taken. Sir William Harcourt has had the advantage of personally studying both manners of conducting business in the House of Commons. Observation of the Gladstonian has confirmed his conviction of the sounder principle that underlies the Disraelian.



MR. GLADSTONE AND THE FLY.

The most notable feature in the thirteenth Parliament of Queen Victoria, as far as it has gone, is the self-effacement of the Irish members. Peers who chanced to sit in the Parliaments of 1874 or 1880, looking in now on the old familiar scene, scarcely recognise it. In those days no debate was complete without contributions from at least a dozen of the Irish members. A case that occurs to the mind dates back just eighteen years. The Government had brought in a Bill proposing the Federation of the South African Colonies; this was a subject, it was reasonable to suppose, not specially attractive for the Irish members. That assumption only showed how limited, at the time, was knowledge of the possibilities of Irish eloquence. The House having got into Committee on the South African Bill, the formal motion that the preamble be postponed was made. Thereupon Mr. O'Donnell blandly interposed. There followed a scene in which Mr. Parnell had "his words taken down," and a condition of affairs supervened culminating in a sitting of twenty-six hours. That has been beaten since, but it was thought much of at the time.

Irish Members: Old Style.

Since those days the capacity of the Irish member, apparently without an hour's preparation, to talk on any subject that comes uppermost, has been frequently vindicated.

In the Salisbury Parliament, which preceded that now sitting, they, falling more into line with the regular Opposition, moderated their oratorical ardour. Since the General Election of 1892 returned Mr. Gladstone to power with the Home Rule flag nailed to the Ministerial mast, the Irish members have developed an almost uncanny ability to forego speech-making. To the ordinary representative of Irish Nationalist politics, this vow of silence must be a severe discipline. What it must be for Mr. W. O'Brien, Mr. T. Healy, and, above all, for Mr. Sexton, no tongue can tell and few imaginations can conceive. To sit silent night after night, week after week, whilst others talk at large, is an ordeal the patient standing of which testifies to possession of high courage and marvellous self-command.

New Style.

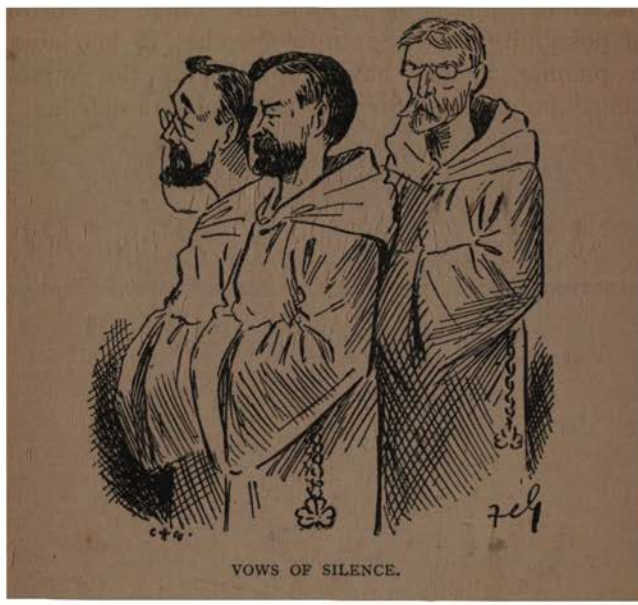
During the debates on the Home Rule Bill, Mr. Healy hit upon a plan which Mr. Arthur Balfour, whilst not approving, admitted was desirable from the point of view of a safety-valve. When any particularly provocative speech was made against the Bill, Mr. Healy punctuated its delivery with more or less pertinent remarks. It is an ordinary habit of members to jot down comment or criticism, as they suggest themselves in listening to a speech they propose to answer. Mr. Healy, in accordance with the Irish Parliamentary Plan of Campaign, did not propose to answer any one by set speech. It was, therefore, no use jotting down observations as they occurred to him. Accordingly he let them fly forthwith, a proceeding which, though not lacking in interest, was somewhat embarrassing even to so practised a speaker as Mr. Balfour. Still, he recognised a certain utility in the habit, since, as he put it, there was every prospect of the hon. gentleman bursting if it were not for this safety-valve of exclamation.

A Safety Valve.

Mr. O'Brien, who up to the epoch of the Boulogne expedition was one of the most prominent and most passionate participants in debate, now finds it possible to sit through a long evening without uttering a sentence. He somewhat unexpectedly broke silence last Session, interposing in debate arising out of the

Mr. W. O'Brien.

conflict between Lords and Commons on the Evicted Tenants Bill. It was interesting to note how with withdrawal from practice he seems to have lost his former hold on the House. Even when—perhaps because when—he faced an assembly the vast majority of which was angrily hostile, he commanded its attention, sometimes controlled its conviction, by the strength of his argument and the power of his eloquence. The transformation in these



VOWS OF SILENCE.

respects marked by his carefully-prepared speech on the Evicted Tenants Bill was painfully notable.

The hardest Case of all.

Of all Irish members this spell of comparative silence is most remarkable in Mr. Sexton. For some years he did his best to spoil his own reputation. With the Irish question in all its phases at his finger-ends, a keen debater, a felicitous phrase-maker, capable on occasion of rising to heights of genuine eloquence, he swamped himself and his audience in floods of immeasurable verbosity. Under the new condition of affairs, pledged not to assist the Opposition in the design he and his

friends alleged against them of indefinitely postponing Home Rule by talking against time, he, above all men, was bound to circumscribe the number and the length of his speeches. The undesigned consequence has been most beneficial. Of late, his contributions to debate, rare in number and condensed in bulk, have been listened to with pleasure and approval by crowded Houses. To influence votes in the House of Commons by speech-making has long been recognised as beyond the range of custom, if not of possibility. Mr. Sexton's speeches, in his later and better manner, if they have not achieved the impossible, have not infrequently influenced the course of debate.

CHAPTER XX

MARCH

THERE was a report current at the beginning of the present Parliament that the Speaker, commiserating the lot of members who for various reasons were not disposed to endow themselves with Court dress, proposed to give a series of supplementary feasts at which ordinary dinner dress would serve. The rumour may be dismissed without a moment's consideration. The Speaker is not likely, voluntarily, to divest himself of one of the conditions which temper his official hospitality. It suffices to be bound to invite in turn 670 gentlemen to dinner, without going out of the way to remove a possible obstacle to the invitation being universally accepted. Accordingly, this Session, as from time immemorial, members dining with the Speaker have been required to don Court dress and carry a sword by their side, when it is not between somebody else's legs.

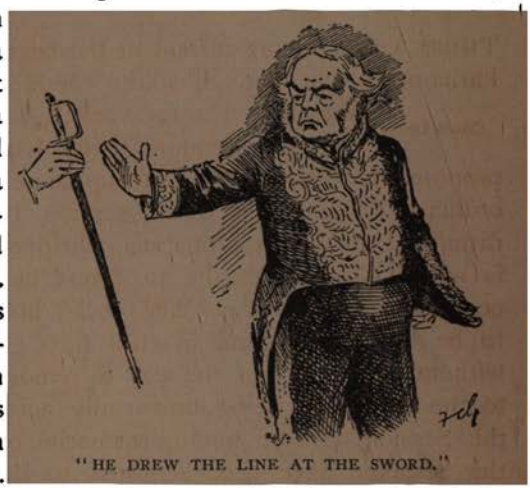
Court Dress.

From their earliest departure on the war-path the Irish members made a point of standing aloof from the Speaker's dinner-parties. There is, indeed, a story of the late Mr. Joseph Gillis Biggar having been encountered on the top of a Clapham 'bus with velvet coat on his back, ruffles at his wrist, black stockings coyly hiding his shapely legs, silver buckles on his shoes, and sword in dainty scabbard hanging within easy reach of his right hand.

Questioned as to the occasion for this disguise, he airily replied, "I've been dining with Mr. Speaker." This is only one of the many myths that linger round the memory of honest Joseph Gillis. As upon another apocryphal occasion it was announced that "the Tenth never dance," so it remains true to this day that the Irish members never dine —at least, not with the Speaker.

Shortly after Mr. Bright, in 1868, joined the Ministry as President of the Board of Trade, the clothes difficulty presented itself. His Quaker conscience revolted against the necessity of assuming the semi-warlike costume which forms the full dress of Her Majesty's Ministers. To prance around in scarlet coat, with gold lace down his trousers and a plumed cocked hat under his arm, was a sacrifice that seemed too much, even as a preliminary condition of being enabled to serve his country. But the uniform is imperatively necessary in connection with Court duties inseparable from Ministerial office. On visits to the Queen, attendance at the Prince of Wales's levées, and at the Ministerial dinners in Speaker's Court, the integrity of the British Constitution demands a certain strictly ordered uniform. After some protest, Mr. Bright gave in on the matters of coat and trousers, even of plumed hat. But he drew the line at the sword. Finally concession was made on this point, he alone of all Her Majesty's Ministers appearing on ceremonial occasions unembarrassed by a sword.

Mr. Bright.



"HE DREW THE LINE AT THE SWORD."

It is said that fewer new members have possessed themselves of Court dress in the present Parliament than in any

of its predecessors of recent times. The reason for that lies on the surface. When the present Parliament began business, there were some authorities who confidently asserted that dissolution would fall upon it before it had enjoyed its first Easter holiday. When nothing happened at Easter, the date of the prophecy was shifted to the Committee stage of the Home Rule Bill. Nothing happening then, other occasions, none remote, were with equal confidence named. Whether immediately or by and by, Parliament could not last long, and what was to become of the new member, thrown upon the country with a brand-new suit of Court dress and no certainty of being returned at another election? The situation, it is said, appealed with peculiar force to Scottish members. Only those with majorities so large as to justify expectation of opportunity of wearing out their Court dress in a subsequent Parliament adventured on the expenditure.

The Direness of Uncertainty.

One peculiar distinction between the Lords and Commons is the greater jealousy with which the latter guard the sanctity of their Chamber. Both Houses have staffs of messengers, chiefly responsible as media of communication between members and the outer world. But whilst messengers in the Lords, charged with a letter, a card, or a Ministerial box, may approach the person addressed and achieve his errand, a messenger in the House of Commons may not approach beyond the bar at one end, or proceed further than the steps of the Speaker's Chair at the other. The consequences are inconvenient and sometimes ludicrous. What happens is that the messenger, standing by the cross benches, hands to the nearest member the message or card with which he is charged, and it is slowly passed along the line till it reaches its destination. Each member in turn thinking it is meant for him, occasionally an absent-minded statesman opens a letter not addressed to him. This is a matter in which the Lords are certainly more up to date, and the Commons might well take a leaf out of their ordinarily despised book.

Lords and Commons.

In another respect, that of advancing Bills by stages, the House of Lords could, as Sir John Astley used to say, give the Commons a stone and beat them. Towards the end of the Session, when, after sitting for months with nothing to do, the Lords find themselves overwhelmed with work, the rapidity with which legislation is accomplished is bewildering to the stranger in the gallery.

Legislation in the Lords.

The Clerk, rising from his seat at the end of the table, recites the name of a Bill. The Lord Chancellor, wigged and gowned on the Woolsack, says in a breath: "The-question-is-that-this-Bill-be-read-a-second-time-those-that-are-of-that-opinion-say-content-the-contrary-not-content-I-think-the-contents-have-it."

The Standing Orders having been suspended, as is usual at this time of the Session, the Lord Chancellor moves half a pace to the left of the Woolsack. By what seems a simultaneous motion, Lord Morley, Chairman of Committees, taking an equal pace in the same direction, slips into the chair at the head of the table. This means that the House is in Committee, the Lord Chancellor nowhere, the Chairman of Committees presiding. "Clause One," says Lord Morley, rising to his feet. "Question-is-that-this-clause-stand-part-of-the-Bill-those-that-are-of-that-opinion-say-content-contrary-not-content-I-think-the-contents-have-it-Clause-two," and so on to the end of the Bill, with the same breathless formula and the same unhesitating conclusion that "the contents have it." When the preamble is added to the Bill, the Chairman puts the question that the House do now resume. The hidden machinery underneath

"LORD CHANCELLOR AND LORD CHAIRMAN."

the floor works again. The Lord Chancellor, sliding half a pace to the right, is on the Woolsack, once more President. The Chairman of Committees, simultaneously moving in the same direction, is out of the Chair, and, for the nonce, is nobody. "The-question-is," says the Lord Chancellor, "that-this-Bill-be-now-read-a-third-time-those-that-are-of-that-opinion," etc. With two able-bodied, active men like Lord Herschell and Lord Morley in charge of the performance, a Bill can be run through the Lords in an incredibly short time.

In the Commons, the best possible in the circumstances is achieved, but the Lords have certain natural advantages that make them the Eclipse of this kind of racing. In the first place, the suspension of the Standing Orders, so that successive stages of a Bill may be taken right off, a matter of course in the Lords, is a serious business in the Commons. The objection of a single member, effectual in stopping the onward course, is withheld only on the rarest occasions. Then there are physical conditions. The Speaker of the House of Commons, unlike the Lord Chancellor, is not seated on the level of the floor. He is raised on a pedestal, and when he leaves the Chair on the House going into Committee, must needs descend the steps and withdraw behind the Chair. However urgent the need of haste, it cannot be expected that the Speaker, in wig and gown, should skip down the steps like a young maiden going to the fair. If he did, he might come in contact with Mr. Mellor, stepping forward to occupy the Chair of Committees, which is close by the foot of the Speaker's Chair. In the Lords there is a wide space between the table and the Woolsack, which makes easy the simultaneous moving of Lord Chancellor and Chairman of Committees.

People who talk glibly of the immediate abolition of the House of Lords should think over these things.

It is curious to find so old a Parliamentary hand as Sir William Harcourt going back to the use of manuscript when

delivering his speeches. He has been in the House of Commons for a practically uninterrupted period exceeding a quarter of a century, and has taken a prominent part in current debates. Before he entered he had established a lucrative practice at the Parliamentary Bar. In conversation he is one of the wittiest of men; in debate one of the quickest. Yet, in these latter days, he invariably prepares his speech verbatim in manuscript, and reads it from first page to last. He does it exceedingly well, his delivery lacking little in animation. But the wonder remains that he should do it at all. The practice is reasonable in delivering his financial statement as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Even Mr. Gladstone, on such occasions, condescended to pretty voluminous notes. Sir William Harcourt extends the practice in various directions, any speech of more than average importance being read from manuscript.

Written Speeches.

This is doubtless due to sense of responsibility with his still new position as Leader of the House of Commons. The custom certainly dates from his assumption of that office. That it is not necessitated by failing aptitude was repeatedly shown in debate in Committee on his great Budget scheme. He was then constantly on guard, occasionally delivering as many as a score of speeches in a single sitting. There was displayed no lack of well-ordered information or of apt phrases. On the contrary, these impromptu addresses were more immediately effective than the carefully prepared orations. It was the old Parliamentary gladiator at his best. To see him with written copy of his speech before him is like watching an accomplished swimmer going back to the use of corks.

Another Parliamentary debater of the first rank who went back to the use of manuscript was Lord Randolph Churchill. The last speech delivered by him in the House of Commons before his departure on his sadly interrupted journey round the world was written out verbatim, and read to the House. He always carefully prepared his speeches in his study, and in his palmiest days

Lord Randolph Churchill.

never rose in ordered debate without a sheaf of notes. But they were merely catch notes, from the line of which he was, upon interruption, ever ready to make brilliant divagation. With his later manner his speech suffered much in the delivery, Lord Randolph, with head bent over his manuscript, not being audible on the back benches. Mr. James Bryce, who sat attentive on the Treasury Bench immediately opposite, and heard every word of it, told me it was a remarkably cogent argument, admirably phrased and illumined by happy illustration, falling, in these respects, nothing short of Lord Randolph's earlier successes.

Of all Parliamentary debaters of the day, whether in Lords or Commons, there is no man less dependent upon notes than is the Marquis of Salisbury. As in important debates in the present Parliament he usually speaks towards the close of a sitting, in anticipation of the Premier (Lord Rosebery) winding up a debate, he has no opportunity for preparation. Certainly there is no smell of the lamp about his discourses. He does not even, as others do, make a note of thoughts or of criticism that occurs to him whilst listening. When his turn comes he presents himself at the table and, leaning one hand upon it, proceeds with unfaltering flow of perfectly turned phrases, most of them carrying barbed points. A sonorous voice and unhurried delivery are details which complete the intellectual treat of

Uncle and Nephew.

"UNCLE AND NEPHEW."

hearing Lord Salisbury drink delight of battle with his peers.

Mr. Arthur Balfour shares in degree his uncle's freedom from the trammels of manuscript notes. He is not entirely without their assistance, but they are merest skeletons, and obviously do not confine the range of his speech. Such as they are, they are invariably written on his knee in the House of Commons. As far as may be observed by an outsider, it is not his habit to prepare in his study his impromptus, or even the salient points of his argument. The most difficult task that can fall to the lot of a Leader on either side of the House of Commons is to make those set orations, whether over the tomb or the altar, for which necessity from time to time arises. Mr. Gladstone is, by common consent, the only man of the age who could rise to either occasion. Mr. Disraeli, when occupying in 1852 the position now filled by Sir William Harcourt, being called upon to pronounce a eulogy on the Duke of Wellington, just answered to his name in the final roll-call, borrowed his best passage from a lament declaimed by M. Thiers over the tomb of Marshal Gouvion de St. Cyr. This second-rate French marshal, dead more than twenty years, was forgotten. But Thiers' flash of eloquence was remembered by others than Mr. Disraeli.

MR. BALFOUR'S "NOTES."

Mr. Chamberlain made the most memorable, if not the only, failure of his Parliamentary addresses when he joined in the funeral orations in the House of Commons on the death of Mr. Bright. Sir William Harcourt is prone on such occasions to assume a lugubrious manner that fatally depresses the spirits of his audience. The last time Mr.

Balfour, in his capacity as Leader of the Opposition, took part in such ceremonial proceedings was when the House of Commons passed a resolution of condolence with France upon the murder of President Carnot. Sir William Harcourt, who moved the resolution, read a funeral sermon from manuscript he took out of his breast coat pocket, whilst his voice rose and fell in melancholy cadence. Mr. Balfour, taking a sheet of notepaper from the table, wrote down the outline of what proved to be a short but almost perfect speech, taking as his text successive points in Sir William Harcourt's monody, and giving them fresh turns.

"A LUGUBRIOUS MANNER."

Harrying Ex-Members.

Old members of the House of Commons withdrawn from Parliamentary life discover on revisiting the familiar scene how jealously guarded are the privileges of sitting members. The House of Commons, if no longer the best club in the world, is certainly the most exclusive. All its approaches are guarded with almost hectic jealousy. It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for an unauthorised stranger to enter even the lobby of the House. These are regulations which, though they may seem harsh in personal experience, are absolutely necessary for the conduct of business. Human interest in the House of Commons is so burning in its intensity, that if approach were easy the building would be swamped by the

idly curious. As it is, strangers unprovided with orders of admission are kept at arm's length with as much severity as if they were infected with leprosy.

Ex-members find these restrictions particularly obnoxious. Looking in upon a place of which they were at one time privileged and perchance honoured occupants, they find their footsteps politely but firmly dogged by the perfection of police on duty at Westminster Palace. Ordinary strangers may not approach the House of Commons as far as the inner lobby without special permission. Ex-members may go so far, but no farther, unless they are accompanied by a sitting member. They may not enter the corridor leading to the dining-room, library, or terrace, nor may they pass in or out by the once familiar staircase leading down to the cloak-room. As for finding a place in or under the Strangers' Galleries, they are on the footing of the obscurest stranger, and must obtain an order from the Speaker or the Serjeant-at-Arms. These restrictions are, perhaps, necessary. But they are none the less irksome to men who for years have had the run of the House.

The House of Lords makes a difference in this respect in the case of Privy Councillors. A right hon. gentleman of whatever distinction who has been a member of the House of Commons may not, after withdrawing from Parliamentary life, approach beyond the inner lobby of his old quarters. But he has always the right of entry to the House of Lords, and may take his place behind the rails skirting the Throne, shoulder to shoulder with such of Her Majesty's Ministers and members of the Opposition from the House of Commons as are also Privy Councillors.

Blocking Hats.

The House of Commons is, probably, the best place in the world in which to make a joke, however poor. It is so profoundly bored with much talking that it clutches with feverish haste at anything that will permit it to laugh. An impassioned orator who concludes his speech by sitting on his hat is regarded as a benefactor of his species. Another who, with sweep

of his right hand, knocks over a glass of water instantly becomes a popular personage. To this day tender memories linger round a genial Q.C.,[1] long severed from Parliamentary life, who once in the course of a single speech twice knocked off the same member's hat. Of all men in the House, the sufferer was Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, a circumstance that added greatly to the subtle enjoyment of the scene. It was in the Parliament of 1880, and the question of the hour related to Mr. Bradlaugh's status.

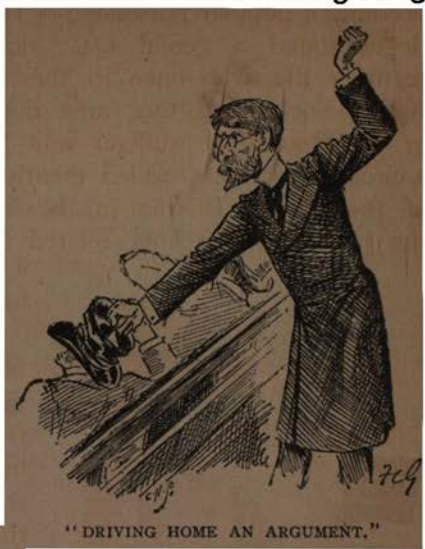
"EQUAL TO THE OCCASION."

"It is essential," said the hon. and learned gentleman, "that this question should be treated in a calm and judicial manner." Instinctively sweeping out his right hand, by way of illustrating the idea of breadth of view, the learned Q.C. smote the crown of the hat of Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, who sat on the Treasury Bench below him.

The future Secretary for War, at that time Financial Secretary, is a man of dauntless courage and imperturbable humour. To a senator sitting with arms folded, head bent down, and mind intent on following the argument of an esteemed friend behind, nothing is more disconcerting than to have his hat suddenly swept off his head. Mr. Campbell-Bannerman was equal to the occasion. The House tittered with laughter. He picked up his hat as if that were his ordinary way of having it taken off, replaced it on his head, and returned to the consideration of the points of the argument he had been considering. Ten minutes later, another wave of emotion overcoming the orator, the hat of the Financial

[1] Mr. Willis.

Secretary to the War Office was once more trundling along the floor. Then, it is true, Mr. Campbell-Bannerman cautiously moved along the bench out of range of fire, whilst the House gave itself up to uncontrolled laughter.



"DRIVING HOME AN ARGUMENT."

In more recent times Mr. William O'Brien has driven home his argument by bringing down a clenched fist on the top of the hat of an hon. member sitting immediately below him. But the record in which the present Secretary of State for War passively assisted remains unbroken.

"THE EXTENSION OF RHODES."

A less vigorous form of humour in which the House delights is a slip of the tongue on the part of a member. The more matter-of-fact he be, the fuller is the enjoyment. Last Session Mr. Arthur Balfour fell upon a phrase, the possible double meaning of which delighted the House. In the course of debate on the affairs of Matabeleland, the Leader of the Opposition emphatically declared that what was needed for the welfare and prosperity of South Africa was "the extension of roads." As the name of Mr. Cecil

Lapsus Linguæ

Rhodes had been prominently mentioned throughout the debate, not without unfriendly hints that self-aggrandisement was the base of his policy, Mr. Balfour was interrupted by a burst of boisterous laughter, at which he affected innocent amazement, and repeated the phrase again and again, till the House permitted him to conclude the passage.

There was much controversy at the time as to whether he had perceived the *double entendre*, or whether in persisting in reiteration of his phrase he was unconscious of its possible application. Talking the matter over later on the same night, he told me that he recognised the slip as soon as the phrase had escaped his lips. But he was not going to give himself away by accepting the construction humorously put upon it. To those who were present and remember his appearance of genuine astonishment at the interruption, this will show that an old Parliamentary hand may still be young in years and ingenuous in manner.

Incomparably the best mixed saying of this kind ever uttered in the House of Commons dropped from the lips of Mr. Cobden. It was told me by one of the few members of the present House who heard the debates on the Commercial Treaty with France.

Mr. Cobden.

"Now I will give you an illustration of what I mean," said Mr. Cobden, reaching a certain point in his exposition. "My hon. friend who sits near me" (indicating Mr. Bright, also in the cotton trade) "spins long yarns of poor quality."

Mr. Cobden got no further with the sentence, the remainder being lost amid inextinguishable laughter. Only Mr. Bright, then in the prime of his power, a frequent and voluminous contributor to Parliamentary debate, did not see the joke.

CHAPTER XXI

APRIL

TALKING to me shortly after his return from South Africa, Lord Randolph Churchill incidentally made reference to "my diary," the remark leaving the impression that he kept such a work with unfailing regularity and unremitted fulness. It will be a pity if the present generation should be deprived of opportunity of studying the book. It would doubtless require severe editing, for the diarist had not a habit of mincing matters of opinion whether in speech or writing. However handled, there must remain a valuable and picturesque record of the inner scenes of English political life between the years 1880 and 1892. After that date the fell disease which gripped the strong life of the still young statesman obtained a mastery that to some extent clouded his judgment and painfully obscured his lucidity.

Lord Randolph's Diary.

The diary, should it ever see the light, will, doubtless, contain a full account of the negotiations which, in the midsummer of 1890, led him within a step of returning to his seat in the Conservative Cabinet. Lord Salisbury's Government was at the time not doing very well. The necessity for its being strengthened from outside was urgent. Once more pleading glances were turned in the direction of Lord Hartington, with entreaty to "come over and help us." It was understood that, amongst Lord Hartington's most influential colleagues, such

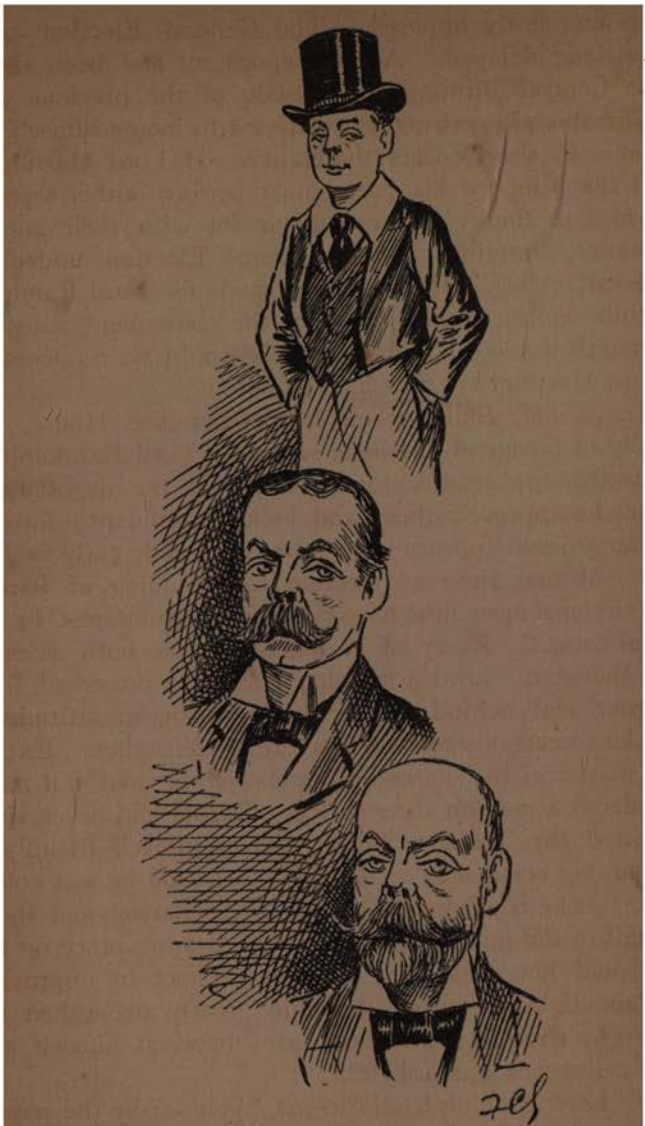
Secret Negotiations.

a step was hotly opposed. The General Election could not be long delayed. At that epoch, as had been shown in the Central Birmingham episode of the previous year, Mr. Chamberlain was not yet disposed to merge himself and his forces in the Conservative ranks. If Lord Hartington joined the Ministry his party must perforce either separate from him or finally throw in their lot with their ancient adversaries, standing at the General Election under the Conservative flag. If room were made for Lord Randolph Churchill on the Treasury Bench, the consequent accession of strength would be such that there would be no necessity for Lord Hartington's crossing the floor.

Mr. W. H. Smith, then Leader of the House, was cordially in favour of the little scheme. Lord Randolph, to all outward appearance, stood aloof from the negotiations, but that he approved them and looked confidently forward to a happy issue appears from a remark made early in July 1890. At that time an election was pending at Barrow under circumstances which excited unusual interest in the political camps. Every effort was made on both sides to secure the seat. Lord Randolph Churchill preserved, from his corner seat behind the Treasury Bench, an attitude of benevolent neutrality towards his former colleagues. Except in the matter of the Parnell Commission he had not made any ordered attack on their policy. But he had never, since he quitted the Treasury Bench, shown himself friendly to its remaining occupants, whilst upon occasion he was coldly critical. If he could be induced to go to Barrow and speak on behalf of the ministerial candidate, his appearance on the scene would not only have immediate effect in improving Mr. Wainwright's chances, it would greatly strengthen the Ministry by showing that the chasm between himself and his old colleagues was bridged.

"If," Lord Randolph said to me, "you see by the papers to-morrow that I have gone down to Barrow to speak for Wainwright, you may bet your boots that before three weeks are over I will be sitting on the Treasury Bench."

He went to Barrow, and it was noticed that on his



LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL.

return to town his attendance on the House of Commons, hitherto fitful, for a while became regular. But he did not within three weeks, or at any later time, reach the Treasury Bench. It was believed by those cognisant of what had been going forward that it was Lord Salisbury who proved implacable. It is small wonder that, save under the direst necessity, he should have shirked renewing relations with the brilliant but erratic and too peremptory statesman who for some months had disputed with him supremacy in his own Cabinet.

Another turning-point of Lord Randolph's career at this interesting time will doubtless be also illumined in the pages of the diary. In 1889 Lord Randolph, apparently in perfect health, certainly in high spirits, had grown weary of playing a comparatively obscure part in politics. He saw in an invitation to contest Birmingham an opportunity of emerging once more into the front rank. In 1885 he had fought Birmingham and almost won the seat, though he tilted against Mr. Bright. Now Mr. Bright was dead, and the Conservative party in Birmingham promptly turned to Lord Randolph. With the assistance of the dissentient Liberals under the leadership of Mr. Chamberlain, the seat might be counted on as won.

Candidate for Birmingham.

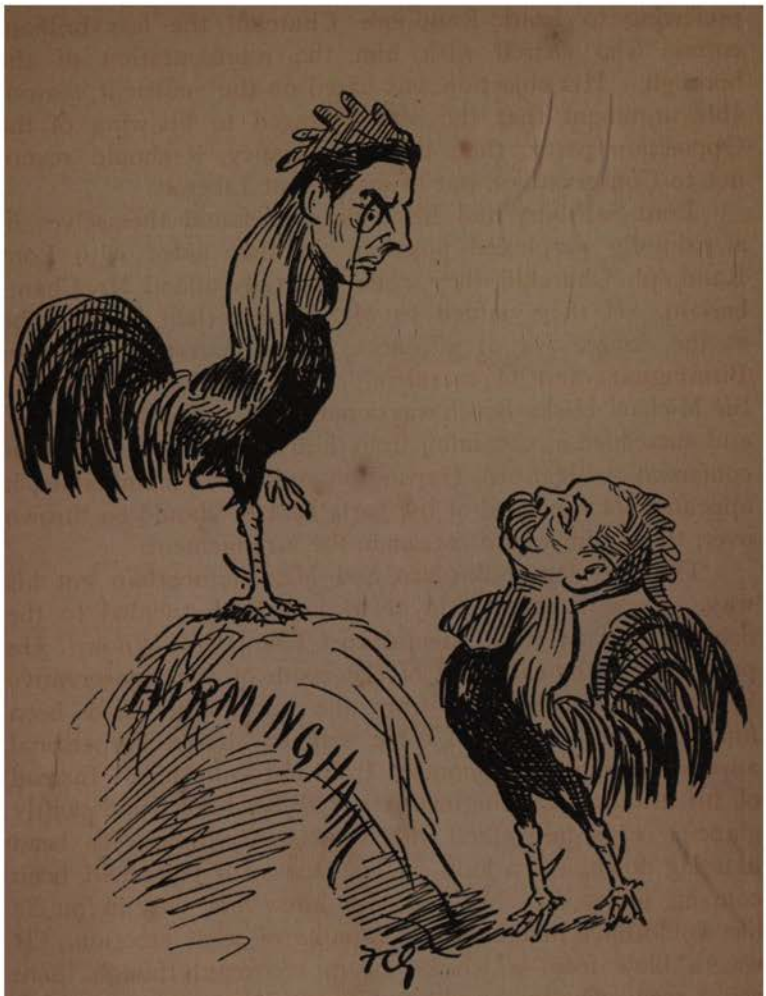
It had long been a desire near to Lord Randolph's heart to represent a centre of teeming political activity like Birmingham. He believed that in this constituency he would find warm sympathy with the democratic Toryism of which he was the apostle. On the 2nd of April 1889 a deputation waited upon him in Connaught Place, conveying to him a pressing invitation to contest the borough. To their surprise he hesitated, promising to give an answer at the House of Commons at five o'clock in the afternoon. It was soon made known that Mr. Chamberlain, instead of showing himself ready to assist in furthering Lord Randolph's views, had put his foot down, threatening open breach of alliance with the Conservative party if the candidature were insisted upon. There was no occasion for the spiteful suggestion current at the time that he was adverse to the

prospect of two kings smelling at the Birmingham rose, preferring to Lord Randolph Churchill the less brilliant coterie who shared with him the representation of the borough. His objection was based on the sufficient, reasonable argument that the seat belonged to his wing of the Opposition party, that, upon a vacancy, it should revert, not to Conservatives, but to dissentient Liberals.

Lord Salisbury and his colleagues found themselves in a painfully perplexed position. If they sided with Lord Randolph Churchill they would mortally offend Mr. Chamberlain. If they yielded to Mr. Chamberlain it would be at the double risk of affronting the Conservative party in Birmingham and of sacrificing Lord Randolph Churchill. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach was deputed to see Lord Randolph, and succeeded in obtaining from him a promise that if, after conference with Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain, it appeared for the good of the party that he should be thrown over, the victim would concur in the arrangement.

The interview took place, and Mr. Chamberlain got his way. Lord Randolph, loyal to his word, yielded to the decision, but at what mental cost few people know. He passed me as he came out of the room of the Conservative Whip where withdrawal from the candidature had been finally wrung from him. He was so altered in personal appearance that for a moment I did not know him. Instead of his usual alert, swinging pace, with head erect, and swiftly glancing eyes, he walked with slow, weary tread, his head hanging down, and a look on his face as if tears had been coursing down, it. No one who knew him only in public life would have imagined him capable of such emotion. It was a blow from which he never recovered, though there was a recurrence to the old ambition to represent something other than the villadom of Paddington when, a little more than a year before his death, he announced his intention of standing for bustling Bradford.

In his place in the House of Commons, and in addressing his constituents, Lord Randolph offered explanation of the reasons that induced him on the eve of Christmas 1886

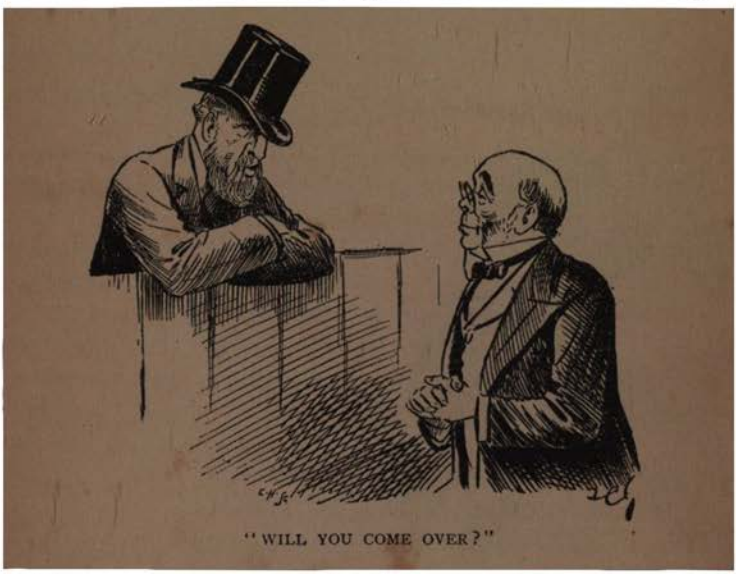


MR. CHAMBERLAIN AND LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL.

to resign his place in the Cabinet of Lord Salisbury. It was because his colleagues, the Secretary of State for War and the First Lord of the Admiralty, instead of, as he hoped, reducing their estimates, made increased demand on the revenues of the coming year. In private conversation Lord Randolph filled up some details that made the proceedings more intelligible.

Forgetting Goschen.

Already in this month of December he had worked out the broad scheme of his Budget, which he was bent upon



"WILL YOU COME OVER?"

making a popular one. The demands of the spending departments hampered, if they did not upset, his calculations. He strove with might and main to induce Mr. W. H. Smith and Mr. Stanhope to recast their estimates. One morning he spent two hours with Mr. Smith, who must have had an uncommonly hard time of it. It was all in vain. The Ministers insisted upon satisfaction of their full demands. Then Lord Randolph determined to play his last card. If he yielded now, in addition to spoiling his Budget, his position in the Cabinet would be determined. Almost at the outset of its deliberations he would have been beaten. He

believed that he was indispensable to the Government, and that his threat of resignation would be sufficient to subdue his colleagues to his imperious will.

He sent in his resignation on the 22nd of December. Lord Salisbury, in accordance with his habit when in a dilemma, turned to Lord Hartington and invited him to save the country by joining the Ministry. Lord Hartington declined, and it seemed that there would be nothing for the belated Ministry but to make peace with Lord Randolph on his own terms and invite him back to the fold.

"A little less than a week after I had written to Lord Salisbury," Lord Randolph told me when chatting about the event, "I was walking up St. James's Street when I met ——" (mentioning the name of a lady well known in London society). "She was driving, and stopped the carriage to speak to me. She asked how things were going on, and I said I thought they were doing nicely. Hartington had refused to join them, and whom else can they have? 'Have you thought of Mr. Goschen?' she said, in a voice and manner that indicated she knew more than the simple inquiry conveyed. It all flashed on me in a moment. I saw the game was lost. I *had* forgotten Goschen."

"NEVERMORE."

It is to be hoped the diary, when we see it, will supply particulars of the Budget scheme on which the young Chancellor of the Exchequer rested high hope of increased and permanent fame. It is certain to have been original, was doubtless daring, and could scarcely have failed to be democratic in its tendencies.

Lord Randolph's Budget.

Authorities at the Treasury, accustomed to deal with financial giants like Mr. Gladstone or Mr. Goschen, were astonished at the ease and thoroughness with which Lord Randolph mastered the intricate questions of national finance, and the originality of the ideas he brought to bear upon the situation of the hour. Talking with me on the subject, one of the most highly-placed authorities at the Treasury remarked, "I do not know how far Lord Randolph had gone in obtaining the sanction of his colleagues in the Cabinet for the scheme he early in December 1886 had adumbrated. But I may tell you that had a Budget planned on the contemplated lines been introduced by a Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, it would have created a sensation equal to what followed on Peel's proposal for the abolition of the Corn Laws, or Dizzy's establishment of Household Suffrage."

One wonders whether Lord Randolph had designed to anticipate Sir William Harcourt in dealing with the Death Duties. Some day we shall know.[1]

A marvellous Memory.

In his early Parliamentary days Lord Randolph Churchill had an almost phenomenal memory. He could repeat a whole page of verse or prose after having once read it over. This being asserted at a country house where he was staying, and polite incredulity being expressed, he offered a wager that he would, after once reading it over, recite a page from any book to be selected by his doubting friend. The wager was accepted, and a volume of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was taken from the library shelf. The volume was opened at random. Lord Randolph read a page, and handing the book over to the umpire, recited every word without error or hesitation.

A Race against Time.

Another wager was won under quite different circumstances. During an early Session of the Parliament of 1880-85, Lord Randolph was dining in company where question arose of the time it took to pass over Westminster Bridge. He undertook to cross it

[1] This I have since learned is the fact.

from the Surrey side to the steps of the Clock Tower what time Big Ben was chiming the quarters and striking the hour of midnight. The bet was accepted, and one summer night, on the stroke of twelve, a solitary pedestrian might have been observed speeding like the wind across Westminster Bridge. It was the future Leader of the House of Commons, and he won his bet.

A RACE AGAINST TIME.

Lord Randolph was a great acquisition to the dinner-table, and for some years his company was more eagerly competed for than any other star of the season. He was a little uncertain, displaying a great ability of saying nothing if the company were not entirely to his liking. Worse still, if it was particularly boring, or for other reason distasteful to him, he had a way of dropping an occasional remark that was not conducive to serenity. He was a great believer in the social board as an adjunct to the political campaign, and entertained hospitably and habitually. When the Fourth Party was beginning to become a power in the House of Commons, the rank and file, with one, two, or, at most, three guests from outside, frequently dined with the Leader in Connaught Place. He often gave little Sunday night dinners at the Turf Club. I remember one cheery evening when, of a party of five, Father Healy was at his best.

"*Le vrai Amphitryon.*"

One of Lord Randolph's dinners, which excited much attention at the time, was given at the Junior Carlton Club in the course of the Session preceding his departure for South Africa. The invitations were "to meet the Prince of Wales," and the fact that among the guests was Mr. Richard

Power, then the Whip of the united Parnellite party, was made much of in political gossip. "Here," it was said, "is Lord Randolph Churchill bringing the Prince of Wales and official Home Rulers together." Lord Randolph was absolutely innocent of any such design. He wanted to get together a varied circle of cheerful people who were likely to interest the Prince of Wales, and there were few more attractive than "Dick" Power, one of the most popular men in the House of Commons. Of others present on this occasion, I remember Sir William Harcourt, Lord Morris, the present Solicitor-General, then plain Mr. Frank Lockwood; Mr. Louis Jennings, and Mr. George Lewis, not at that time knighted. Of a company that did not exceed a dozen, three have since died—Louis Jennings, Dick Power, and now the host.

The last time I saw Lord Randolph was when he bade me good-bye on the eve of his journey round the world, which ended in the haven of a grave at Woodstock. In his mother's house in Grosvenor Square he gave a farewell dinner to something like a score of old friends, a catalogue of whose names testifies to the wideness of his personal sympathies. On his right hand sat Mr. Arthur Balfour, in old Fourth Party days a mere private under his command, now heritor of the position he had thrown up. On his left was Mr. Henry Chaplin, with whom at one portion of his stormy career early friendship had suffered some vicissitudes. Next to the Cromwellian ex-Chief Secretary for Ireland sat his successor, Mr. John Morley, a juxtaposition which made Lord Randolph's eyes twinkle with something of their ancient merriment. Looking round the table, I recall among the guests Mr. David Plunket, Mr. Rochfort Maguire, the earliest emissary of civilisation at the Court of Lo Bengula; Mr. Labouchere, Mr. Edward Dicey, Sir George Lewis, Sir Henry Calcraft, Sir Edward Lawson, Sir M. Hicks-Beach, Sir Algernon Borthwick, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, the dramatist; and Sir Francis Knollys, secretary to the Prince of Wales.

A Farewell Dinner.

Lord Randolph told me he had asked three others whose presence, had it been brought about, would have further diversified this notable gathering. They were Sir William Harcourt, detained at home by a dinner engagement; Mr. Asquith, on duty at White Lodge in anticipation of the birth of an heir to the Duke of York; and Mr. Henry Irving, engaged on theatrical duties. Our host, though somewhat excited, was, more than usual of late, his old self. He spoke with eager interest of his coming journey. The two prospects that most attracted him were the shooting of big game in India and the opportunity of visiting Burmah—"Burmah, which I annexed," he proudly said. He had accepted a commission from a Paris journal to write some half-dozen letters, descriptive of his tour, and intended to fill them chiefly with record of his shooting expedition. But he did not reach India; and Burmah never saw the statesman who, in his brief tenure of the India Office, added the glow of its rubies to the splendour of the English crown.

"SWALLOWS."

A vacant Seat.

It is possible that when these lines appear in print Mr. Gladstone, invigorated by his sojourn on the Riviera, may have returned, casually at least, to the familiar scene at Westminster. Up to the present time of writing he

has not visited the House of Commons since on the night of March in last year he quietly walked out after having flung down the gauntlet at the feet of the astonished peers. It seemed on the morrow of that day that it would be difficult, if not impossible, for the House of Commons to carry on its business with this commanding figure withdrawn. It was like taking away the centre pillar from the roof-tree.

"QUIETLY WALKED OUT."

But it is the old story that no man, however supremely great, is indispensable. An anonymous philosopher has written: "The man who is curious to see how the world could get along without him can find out by sticking a needle into a millpond, withdrawing it, and looking at the hole." In the dignity of the House of Commons, its measure of eloquence, its range of individual influence, a great chasm yawns where Mr. Gladstone used to sit. Nevertheless, the House, being above all things (in spite of some episodes to the contrary) a business assembly, having made up its mind that Mr. Gladstone's withdrawal from active participation in its life was inevitable and is irretrievable, promptly set itself to do without him.

"Mr. Gladstone."

During the present Session evidence of a significant character has been forthcoming of the final and complete recognition of the fact that one who for half a century was a chief ornament of the House of Commons no longer forms part of it. A familiar and well-devised regulation of debate in the House is that no member may allude to another by surname. If a Minister, he mentions him by the style of his office. If a private member, he drags in the full name of his constituency. Mr. Gladstone is in Parliamentary parlance "the right honourable gentleman the member for Midlothian," and

should be so styled in chance reference to him in debate. But so remote has he grown in the minds of men busy night and day at Westminster that several times they, making chance allusion to him, speak of "Mr. Gladstone." On the earliest occasions of this lapse it was unobserved. As it threatened to become habitual, recurrence was met by cries of "Order! order!" and the offending member harked back to the more rotund style of allusion.

Noble Lords and Hon. Members.

This is one of the forms of procedure in which the House of Lords directly differs from the Commons. New members of the popular Chamber visiting the Lords have felt a momentary shock at hearing peers referred to by name in the course of debate. When it comes to actually naming a bishop the sensation is not altogether free from taint of sacrilege. It is noted that peers recently imported from the Commons avoid as far as possible what they have been trained to regard as an unparliamentary practice. They talk of "the noble lord on the woolsack," "the noble lord who has just spoken," "the noble marquis below the gangway," or "the noble lord on the cross benches." The awkwardness soon wears off, and they come to speak of Lord Spencer, Lord Wemyss, Lord Cowper, and the rest with dangerous glibness.

The necessity for this direct reference is insuperable in the Lords, for the sufficient reason that there is no other means of identifying members. In the Commons it is not only convenient, but, though it seems a small matter, there is no custom that does more to preserve the dignity of the House and the courtesy of debate than that which forbids the mention of members by name. There is a subtle, indescribable difference between alluding to an adversary as "the hon. member for North Louth" and the feelings that might submerge the excited mind if he were called "Mr. Healy," much less if it were permissible to allude to him as "Tim." There is the same difference between the actuality "Mr. T. Harrington" and the abstraction "the hon. member for the Harbour Division of Dublin."

I select these names because juxtaposition of the

two gentlemen in a recent debate on the action of the Parnellite members *vis-à-vis* Home Rule brought sharply out possibilities under other circumstances—say similar close neighbourhood in debate at the Board of Guardians or in Committee-Room No. 15. It is, in given circumstances and with heated temperament, so easy to fly at Tim Healy or to land a counter-stroke on the jaw of Tim Harrington—of course, I mean in the way of verbal argument—that the temptation might prove irresistible. When, in the whitest heat of controversy, one has to pause and mouth the stiffly courteous reference to "the hon. and learned member for North Louth," "the hon. and learned member for the Harbour Division of Dublin," not only is time given for reflection, but there is imported into the conversation a certain ceremoniousness quite incompatible with roughness of demeanour or coarseness of speech.

"TIM."

When procedure in the House of Representatives at Washington was being formed, this spell in use in the House of Commons was noted and attempt made to adapt it. It was ordered that no member should be alluded to by name, the form of reference being "the hon. gentleman from Kentucky," "the hon. gentleman from Wisconsin," "the hon. gentleman from Illinois," and so forth. This avoidance of the worst has had modifying effect. But, as occasional reports from Washington testify, it has not wholly effected the desired purpose. When the wind of controversy rises, the appellation "honourable" is dropped, and there are hardly any limits to the irritating contumely and scorn that may lurk under a chance reference to "the gentleman from Kentucky," "the gentleman from Wisconsin," or "the gentleman from Illinois."

CHAPTER XXII

MAY

IN the history of Parliament it has rarely happened that, within the space of fourteen months, the House of Commons has, in swift succession, been deprived of the presence of two of its foremost men. Little more than a year after Mr. Gladstone resigned the Premiership, and practically withdrew from Parliamentary life, Mr. Peel stepped out of the Chair, and the House lost an appreciable portion of its stateliness. It is eleven years on the 26th February last since Mr. Whitbread moved that "Mr. Arthur Peel take the Chair of this House as Speaker." When the member for Leamington rose to make acknowledgment of the honour done him there was some cheering from the Liberal benches. But it was unmistakably a perfunctory business. The truth is, the Speaker-elect was a personality unfamiliar even by sight to the majority of members. His brother they knew: burly, sometimes boisterous, Sir Robert. But who was Arthur that he should be made Speaker?

The late Speaker.

SIR ROBERT PEEL AND MR. ARTHUR PEEL.

Yet at this date he had very nearly served his majority as a member of the Assembly which presently he was to adorn with unrivalled, unsuspected gifts. July next would, if he were still with us, see the thirtieth year he has sat in the House, uninterruptedly representing Warwick, with which borough, by the latest Reform Bill, passed whilst he was Speaker, Leamington was, for Parliamentary purposes, bracketed. He had held minor office, being successively Secretary to the Poor Law Board, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, Whip (for a few months whilst the House was not sitting), and Under Secretary of State for Home Affairs through the Session of 1880. In December of that year, finding the duties of an Under Secretaryship too exhausting for his strength, he retired, as it seemed, from Ministerial and official life, obscurity from which, four years later, he emerged into the fierce light that beats on the Speaker's Chair.

A Surprise.

From the moment Mr. Peel stood up to advance to the Chair his personality seemed to undergo a miraculous change. The quiet, retiring, silent member suddenly revealed himself to the astonished House as a man of commanding presence, resolute will, and rare gifts of oratory. I have heard many notable speeches in the House of Commons, but never one which created such a sensation as the brief speech of Mr. Arthur Peel, standing by the corner seat below the gangway in the dress of a private member, acknowledging his unanimous election to the position of First Commoner of England. That is a proud, ancient, unique title. Mr. Peel has not only borne it untarnished, he has distinctly added to its lustre. There are few men in the House of Commons who can say with Mr. Gladstone that they have sat under six Speakers. It does not need that opportunity of experience to form an estimate of Mr. Peel's position in the long, illustrious roll. It would simply be impossible to name any point on which improvement in manner, bearing, or any of the more solid qualities that go to make up a successful Speaker might have been achieved by Mr. Peel, more especially through the later years of his Speakership.

One quality that might in others have proved a fatal defect was with him the crown of the perfect edifice. Constitutionally he is a man not slow to anger, rather subject to gusts of impetuous passion. The House will remember more than one occasion when the lightning has suddenly flashed forth from the stately figure standing by the Chair, and the thunder has rolled under the canopy. It has been magnificent, and it has also been war. No man, not even Mr. Biggar in his adamantine days, withstood the wrath of the outraged majesty of the late Speaker.

Mr. Peel is probably surprised at his own endurance in being able to retain the Speakership through eleven years.

An Ideal Speaker.

As early as the Session of 1888, the state of his health was such that there were circumstantial reports of his imminent retirement. Exactly a year ago these were repeated with definite assurance. Writing to me under date 3rd May 1894, Mr. Peel said: "I do not know how the rumours originated and acquired such a specific character. I have not entertained the idea of resignation, which must of course depend upon the state of my health and upon my powers of endurance, which have undoubtedly been shaken by a recent attack of influenza and by its consequences." From time to time his pale face showed at what personal cost he persisted in taking the Chair. As with his illustrious father, a sense of public duty was ever paramount, and in view of opportunity of serving his country and the House of Commons, which he loved, he risked his life as directly and as fearlessly as a

THE SPEAKER (MR. PEEL).

soldier stakes his on the field of battle. It is not exaggeration to say that there is no occupation open to man which makes supremer calls on capacity than does that of Speaker of the House of Commons. The Assembly is a team of exceedingly kittle cattle, which sharply resents any appearance of being driven, but secretly likes to know there is a strong hand guiding it, and is prone openly to resent proof to the contrary.

Against the Speaker's decision there is the ultimate Court of Appeal of the House itself. But it is rarely invoked. Practically, the Speaker wields autocratic power. A difficulty peculiar to his semi-judicial office is the uncertainty of everything in the House of Commons. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the slumbrous depths may be stirred by sharp tumult, and the Speaker called upon forthwith to still it. The very fact of his unchallengeable position would make a mistake fatal. I have a vague idea that upon one occasion Mr. Peel gave a judgment recognised by the House, and admitted by subsequent events, to be mistaken. I really forget what it was about. What dwells with sharper touch on the memory is the reiterated occasions when the sonorous voice, ringing through the suddenly silenced chamber, has brought order out of chaos, has comforted the House with assurance that its highest interests, its dignity, and its noblest traditions were worthily represented, and would never fail to be vindicated, by the Speaker.

The strategic Movement to the Rear.

It was one of the penalties of prominent position that Mr. Chamberlain's escapade in the division lobby on the night Sir Henry James moved a resolution against the import of cotton duties in India for a while engrossed public attention. The incident is by no means uncommon. It is sometimes detected, but, there is reason to believe, oftener than not it passes without notice being taken. In Mr. Chamberlain's case there was every detail contributory to dramatic effect. When the House met on Thursday, the 21st of February,

there appeared certain prospect of a crisis that would result in the resignation of the Ministry. On the Address they had been attacked again and again under the leadership of Mr. Arthur Balfour. Now, the other wing of the Unionist party had put the battle in array. It was known that the Lancashire Liberal members, under pressure from their constituents, were resolved at any cost to resist a proposal on which Ministers had staked their existence. If these votes could be captured the Government were doomed.

It happened on this particular night that Mr. Arthur Balfour was detained at home in company with the influenza fiend. This naturally brought Mr. Chamberlain into fuller prominence, and promised to make his personal triumph the more complete. In due course came Mr. Henry Fowler's famous speech, before which opposition melted like snowflakes on the river. Long before midnight it was clear that not only would the Government not be turned out, but that they would have a rattling majority; whilst to those who, after the Secretary for India's speech, supported Sir Henry James would attach the odium of sacrificing to personal business interests the welfare of India.

MR. FOWLER: "WE ARE ALL MEMBERS FOR INDIA."

It is easy enough after the event to perceive that Mr. Chamberlain would have done better to follow the ordinary course and back up his colleague in the division lobby. Decision had to be taken amid the bustle of the House being cleared for the division at the close of a debate that had taken a surprising turn. Mr. Chamberlain hesitated and was lost. His appeal to the Serjeant-at-Arms for means of escape by the locked door, his return to the Ministerial lobby, the only avenue open to him, and his final

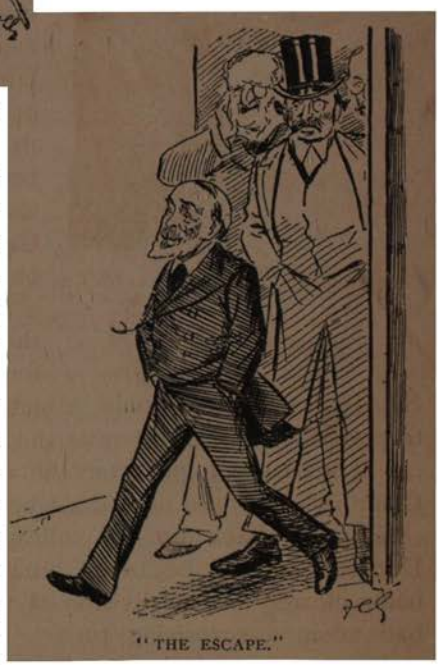
disappearance through what the Speaker slyly described as "one of those means of escape known to everybody" were narrowly watched, graphically reported, and irresistibly appealed to the popular sense of humour.

"SHUT IN."

It was for the time embarrassing and hurtful, since here, scarcely less than in France, it is ridicule that kills. But in a sense, also, it was complimentary, as had the incident befallen a member of less interesting personality, it would have been laughed at and straightway forgotten.

In the wrong Lobby.

Nothing is commoner than to find members straying into the wrong lobby. In one of the divisions on the Address, immediately preceding Mr. Chamberlain's adventure, Mr. Labouchere found himself in the lobby with the Conservatives. He had just time to turn and flee before the door was locked, his escape being accompanied by a hilarious cheer, plainly heard in the emptied House. What makes the situation difficult is that approach to the separate lobbies is obtained from opposite ends of the House. If



"THE ESCAPE."

a member inadvertently walks into the wrong lobby anywhere near the tail of the procession, he has barely time to withdraw, rush the full length of the House, and gain the other door before it is locked. The feat is sometimes accomplished, ladies in the gallery being appalled at the discovery of a father, a husband, or a brother flying up or down the floor of the House at a speed scarcely exceeded by Tam O'Shanter when, on a memorable night, he crossed the brig.

The House dividing.

When the process of clearing the House is nearly accomplished, the Serjeant-at-Arms stands by the locked door leading into the outer lobby. Messengers are appointed to side doors leading into either lobby. They hold up their hand in signal that the door is locked and the House cleared. Whereupon the Serjeant-at-Arms unlocks the outer door, and the stream which has passed the wicket where the clerks stand ticking off names surges into the outer lobby.

Up to a very recent date this lobby was also kept locked, members being cooped up till the tellers had completed their task and handed in the figures at the table. At the beginning of last Session the Speaker authorised the unlocking of the central lobby door simultaneously with the appearance of the head of the stream issuing from the division lobby. Whilst convenient for members, this is an arrangement that considerably increases the difficulties of the Whips, and may some day affect the destiny of a Ministry. It not infrequently happens that a critical division on the main question is immediately followed by one on a side issue or a formal point. Under the old order of things the Whips had their men in hand ready to return to the House if a second division were challenged. Now they stream forth like schoolboys at the stroke of noon, and are competing for cabs in Palace Yard at the moment when the bell is ringing for another division.

Beside the danger of inadvertently straying into the wrong lobby, there is the risk of being caught napping in the lobbies when the division unexpectedly takes place.

Such was the fate of Sir Walter Barttelot. One night, during the height of the Parnellite obstruction, the Irish members trooping into the Lobby, against the united force of Liberals and Conservatives, found Sir Walter fast asleep. Suddenly awakened he tried to escape, but was captured, brought to the table, and obliged to tell his sad story. Another case was that of an esteemed Liberal member, whom the division bell surprised, locked up in one of the lavatories. It was the wrong lobby for him, so he proposed to stop there. He also was brought up to the table and invited to state where he was when the question was put.

Catching a Weasel asleep.

"In there—in there!" he said, spasmodically pointing finger and thumb at an imaginary recess under the gallery behind the Treasury Bench.

The capture of Mr. Joseph Gillis Biggar under similar circumstances was an event that for the Conservatives gilded a whole week of hard fighting with the Irishry. The member for Cavan, worn out with all-night sittings, one evening retired to the division lobby, and, stretching himself on a couch, fell into peaceful slumber. It was broken in upon by the roar of delight with which the Conservatives, coming in for a division challenged by Mr. O'Donnell, found the member for Cavan within their lines. Joseph, like Major Bagstock, who bore his Christian name, was "sly, dev'lish sly." He affected to make light of the incident. One more added to the Ministerial majority against the Irish members would, he said, be neither here nor there. The Ministerialists thought he was wisely endeavouring to minimise an awkward incident, and passed on through the wicket, chuckling at the notion that the division list of the next day would contain the name of Mr. Biggar catalogued with the gentlemen of England in opposition to his esteemed colleagues under the leadership of Mr. Parnell. Mr. Hart-Dyke (not yet knighted) was the Ministerial teller in this lobby, and kept a sharp look-out for Joseph Gillis. When the last member had passed through it was known that the member for Cavan had not voted, and yet the lobby

was tenantless. A hunt was merrily organised, and one of the lavatory doors was discovered to be shut and locked.

"Very well," said Mr. Hart-Dyke, in a voice designed to penetrate the closed door, "we will wait till he comes out. I shan't hand the figures in to the clerk till the last man has voted."

There was no help for it, and after a brief time Joseph Gillis blushingly came forth, passed the wicket, and had the satisfaction of recording his vote on behalf of Her Majesty's Government against his comrades from Ireland.

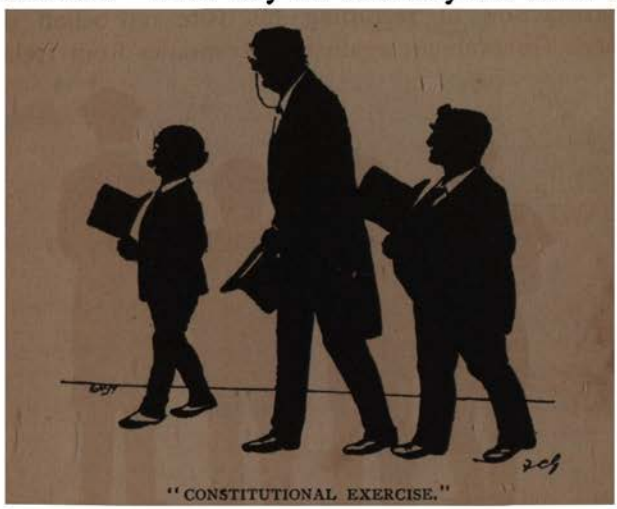
"TELLERS."

When obstruction is in full force the process of taking divisions is regularly and effectively used. Like much else in the same direction, opportunity was discovered by the Irish members in the early stages of the fight for Home Rule. British members systematically declined to play the Parnellite game by extending the debate. The Irish members talked as long as they could, and when physical exhaustion set in they just took a division. When the House is full and the numbers pretty equally divided, a division occupies from ten to fifteen minutes. When the minority is small and the majority

Obstruction.

muster in large numbers, the time is increased, since the bulk of members are passing through one gallery instead of simultaneously deploying in two detachments.

In addition to taking up so much time there is, for those engaged in the conflict, a pleasant and healthful change of occupation. Whilst they rest from the labour of talking, they stretch their legs in a stroll round the Lobby, and come back refreshed. When they are tired they can do it again,



"CONSTITUTIONAL EXERCISE."

with the certainty that the majority of this potent Assembly are at their mercy.

An attempt was made in revising the Rules of Procedure to grapple with this tyranny, by empowering the Speaker or the Chairman of Committees either to refuse to put a challenge for a division when he regards it as frivolous and vexatious, or, short of that, to call upon members clamouring for a division to stand up in their places and be counted. It is fresh evidence of the innate Conservatism of the House of Commons where its procedure is concerned that these regulations have practically become a dead letter. I remember only one occasion when a small faction, insisting on a hopeless division, were called upon to stand up in their places. The object in view, the saving of time, is only

partially effected. What follows upon the episode is that the Committee clerks are called in, bringing their printed list of names with them. Standing at the Bar they tick off the names of the members upstanding, and these are recorded in the division lists the next day as if they had voted.

The effect was certainly deterrent, inasmuch as ordinary members shrank from the ridicule of the situation. To stand up like naughty boys placed on a stool at school whilst their companions audibly chuckled is not an envious position for a possibly elderly gentleman, something in the City, or in professional courts. The practice was not pursued, though there were many occasions, notably in Committee on the Home Rule Bill of 1893, when action of the Chairman in this direction seemed irresistibly invited.

The Last of the Smolletts.

A paragraph has appeared in the papers announcing that Mr. Patrick Boyle Smollett, the last of the Smolletts of Bonhill, a descendant of Tobias Smollett, novelist and historian, died in his ninety-second year at the family residence, Cameron House, Dumbartonshire. Few men in the present House of Commons will recognise in connection with this record a member who acquired some notoriety in the Parliament of twenty years ago. He then sat for Cambridge, coming in with the flood of the tide that swept away the Liberals and placed Mr. Disraeli in power. It was not his first acquaintance with the House, since he had represented his native county of Dumbarton from 1859 to 1868. He came back after long retirement, an odd fossil, with manners that ruffled the equanimity of a modern Parliament that had not yet seen the growth of Mr. Biggar.

Mr. Smollett took the earliest opportunity on his return to the House to step to the front. He brought forward an amendment on going into Committee of Supply with the object of calling attention to "the abrupt dissolution of the late Parliament." The performance might have passed without notice, only it chanced that Mr. Gladstone was making one of his then fitful appearances on the Front

Opposition Bench. On him Mr. Smollett fastened, one hand in his trousers pocket, the other shaking a truculent forefinger at the statesman whom he accused of indulging in "sharp practice more likely to have come from an attorney's office than from a Cabinet of English gentlemen." "The stratagem," he added, "recoiled on the head of the trickster," this with another gesture towards Mr. Gladstone, but just stepped down from high estate, not yet accustomed to these personal vituperations. The ex-Premier rose at last. He was magnificently angry, trampling on Smollett as a lion, raging through a jungle, crushes smaller things.

The member for Cambridge, though by nature pachydermatous, did not soon get over this mauling. He recovered in time, and occasionally amused the House by his gruff speech, attacking people from whom he differed as if he were literally butting at them with his bullet head. He was very proud of his descent from Tobias Smollett. In copies of *Dod* of the day will be found a note, contributed by him, stating that he was "the great-grandnephew of the celebrated historian and novelist." That he tried to live up to his ideal of his kinsman was evident in his Parliamentary manner.

Effect was lent to his home-thrusts by the Dumbartonshire accent in which they were delivered. This peculiarity once led him and the House into a difficulty. Speaking in the course of debate on India, Mr. Smollett made a remark which drew from old Sir George Balfour one of those tearful, plaintive cries of "Hear, hear!" with which he was wont to express approval of a passing remark. Mr. Smollett turned upon him, his red face seeming to blaze with fury, his sparse hair standing straight up in uncontrollable wrath.

"The gallant gentleman cheers," he said, "and I will admit to the fool——"

A shudder ran through the House. Sir George Balfour never succeeded in maintaining at Westminster the reputation earned at Calcutta. Still, this was going a little too far even for a chartered libertine of debate like the member for Cambridge. Several members sprang to their feet with evident intention of appealing to the Speaker on the point

of order. Mr. Smollett, embracing them in one comprehensive glare, continued: "I will admit to the fool all that has been said about these unjustifiable annexations."

Then the House saw that "fool" was Dumbartonshire for "full."

New Continents.

Mr. Acland, Minister of Education, has a good story, not yet collated into the interesting accounts from time to time published by school inspectors, of the eccentricities of examinations. At a Board School in Central London a class was under examination in geography. The exercise had been preceded by lessons in grammar, where one of the scholars had mastered the great truth that "the vowels are five in number—a, e, i, o, u, sometimes w and y."

MR. ARTHUR ACLAND.

"How many quarters are there in the globe?" asked the inspector, turning to a fresh subject.

"Four, sir," answered a smart boy.

"Name them."

"Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, sometimes w and y."

A new Romance of the Peerage.

Mr. Swift MacNeill omits from his account of the monotonously undesirable origin of peers who, having obtained their peerage in Ireland, voted against the Home Rule Bill, a story which lingers to this day in Dublin as to the genesis of a well-known peerage. At the time of the Rebellion of '98 the founder of the family was a second-hand bookseller in Dublin. After a moderately long career behind the counter he retired from business, bought an estate near Dublin, set up as a country gentleman, and established a family, which, growing in influence and affluence, were at length admitted to the English peerage.

The people of Dublin could not believe that any man could make a fortune out of selling second-hand books, certainly not a fortune sufficiently large to justify the style in which the retired tradesman lived. In this dilemma the story got about, and was firmly believed in Dublin, that the money was forthcoming from discovery of bank-notes in the books bought in the libraries of the Irish gentry when their establishments were broken up. In the troublesome times preceding and following upon '98, well-to-do people were afraid to put their money in banks that seemed tottering to a fall. They accordingly (so rumour ran) discreetly disposed of them between the leaves of their books, stowed these away in their libraries, and either forgot or lost trace of them. The old bookseller, falling by chance upon such treasure-trove, thereafter carefully examined books coming into his possession, and so made his fortune.

MR. SWIFT MACNEILL ON THE IRISH PEERAGE.

This fairy tale was told me by a member of the present House of Commons, whose family has long been associated with Dublin.

CHAPTER XXIII

JUNE

AN old Parliamentary hand, who has known the House of Commons for thirty years, had Ministerial connection with one side and enjoyed intimate personal acquaintance with leading personages on the other, laments to me the lack of possibilities of leadership, either in the Cabinet or in the House of Commons. It has come to pass, he says, that under existing circumstances the so-called Leader does not drive but is driven. He recalls the time when Mr. Disraeli, yet far off the supreme height of his power, was, for a brief while, Leader of the House of Commons. This was from midsummer 1866 till the General Election of 1868, which brought Mr. Gladstone in with a rush. Through the Session of 1868 Disraeli was not only Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House, but Premier. Still, though nominally in power, he was actually in a minority. But he would hold office

Other Days other Manners.

"DRIVEN."

on no other consideration than that, being Leader, he should lead and the party should follow.

There were young bloods amongst the Conservatives in those days. On one occasion, two who have since come prominently to the front gave notice of opposition to a proposal made by Mr. Gladstone which the Ministerial party were enthusiastically inclined to support. Disraeli thought it would be a mistake in tactics, and decided that the amendment should not be moved. He sent for his two young friends (my informant was one of them), spoke to them with fatherly approval of their political acumen, extolled their amendment regarded as an abstract proposition, and finished by saying it would not do in the practical politics of the moment.

"And there," said the now grey-haired statesman, "was an end of the matter. We were highly flattered by the attention paid to us by the Prime Minister. Nothing could be more gracious than his manner, or, I may add, more inflexible. We thought no more of arguing with him than we would with the headmaster at Eton. Still less did we contemplate disobeying his injunction. We just tore up the draft of the amendment. But imagine such a case arising to-day, and it is not difficult, for it occasionally presents itself at three or four turns of an important debate. Suppose two, or even one, of the gentlemen on the benches below the gangway thought they knew better than Harcourt how to manage a particular turn in the stream of events. The first intimation he would have of the pother would come either by hearing notice given of an amendment, or by finding it on his copy of the Orders when he opened it in the morning. As for hope that at a private interview the mutineers would be brought to toe the line, you might as well try to check the flow of the tide in the Thames by jumping into the river off this Terrace.

"It is better on our side, but Arthur Balfour is not wholly free from the malign influence of insubordination. The crises are not so acute, partly because he is in a stronger position, being free from the responsibilities of

office, and largely because with us habits of discipline are more deeply ingrained.

"Beyond this personal attitude of individual members, there underlies the situation the new disturbing element of factions or sections of party who are up for sale. When I began political life, there were two parties, Liberals and Conservatives, and we had stand-up fights round big principles. Now you never quite know where you are to-day, and dare not guess where you may be to-morrow. If a Leader of either party attempts to walk straight along the ordered path, he is assailed either by a section of his own followers, who want to go down some by-path, or is allured by the prospect of gaining over, even temporarily, a section of the other side if he will only change his step. There is no more leadership. It is all opportunism. I remember what Harcourt said in summing up the debate on the Address in February after we, the Constitutional party, had gone wandering round all points of the compass in search of a hole in which we might drop the Government. 'Why can't you fight under your old colours?' he asked. 'What has become of the old blue flag? There seems to be no true blue left. There is a kind of mixture, I don't know how to describe it. There is the faded yellow of Birmingham' (that was Chamberlain's amendment). 'There is a little touch of green from Waterford' (that's John Redmond's), 'and there's a splotch of red from West Ham.' That referred to our appropriation of Keir Hardie's amendment on the unemployed.

"A SPLOTCH OF RED FROM WEST HAM."

"It is true and was well put. It is true even in fuller degree of the position of Rosebery and Harcourt, in virtual command of a motley host in an ever-simmering condition of mutiny.

It's a new turn of things when you come to think of it. Some day there may arise amongst us a leader strong enough to combat circumstances and really lead. I think it is highly improbable. It is more likely that the present condition of things will become increasingly prevalent."

The Stranger within the Gate.

It is an old tradition of the House of Commons that when a division is imminent the House is cleared of strangers. This admission of knowledge of the presence of strangers is in itself a comparatively modern innovation. According to statutes, the House of Commons at this day conducts its business in privacy. There is still unrepealed a Standing Order forbidding the presence of strangers at debates. Up to the year 1875 any member casually observing "I spy strangers," would lead to peremptory clearing of the galleries. In the Session of that year happened Mr. Biggar's famous escapade, when, observing the Prince of Wales in the gallery over the clock, he "spied strangers," and the Heir Apparent, the nobility in the gallery by his side, and the gentry on the benches behind, were straightway driven forth. Shortly after the Standing Order was amended, and strangers are no longer at the mercy of an individual member.

At a time when strangers were formally prohibited from attendance on debates, a compromise was effected whereby, whilst their presence was winked at, they were obliged to quit when the House was cleared for a division. This also, in course of time, became modified, till the application of the order was confined to the few strangers who obtained the privileged seats under the gallery on the floor of the House. When the Speaker puts the question and a division is challenged, he, up to Easter in the present Session, wound up the formula with the command, "Strangers will withdraw." Thereupon the strangers under the gallery trooped out, and were conducted across the lobby into the corridor beyond, where they waited till the division was over. As on critical occasions the division is

the most picturesque and dramatic feature of a debate, the advantage of the seats under the gallery was considerably handicapped.

The reason for the injunction was plain enough. Strangers seated in this part of the House might easily, whether by accident or design, join the throng of members trooping into the division lobby. What would happen when they reached the wicket where the clerks stand ticking off names can only be surmised, since there is no record of such catastrophe having happened. But I have personal recollection of at least two instances where strangers, admitted past the doorkeepers with orders for seats under the gallery, have strayed into the House itself. In one case, during debate on a liquor traffic Bill, two gentlemen connected with the Trade, armed with orders for seats under the gallery, instead of turning to the right or left when they passed the doorkeepers, pressed straight forward, entered by the glass door, and took their seats below the gangway, almost under the nose of the Serjeant-at-Arms. There they sat, and listened to the debate with great comfort. They might have sat it out but for the accident of a division. They did not know exactly what to do when, on the question being put, members began to troop off to the right or left. Their hesitation betrayed them, and they were bundled out with alarming precipitancy.

Another case happened in the Session of 1889, during debate on the Tithe Rent-charge Bill, in charge of Mr. Henry Matthews, then Home Secretary. A stranger under the gallery, much interested in the subject, found a difficulty in catching all the Home Secretary's remarks. Immediately before him was a half-empty cushioned bench, in many ways more convenient than the one to which he had been conducted. He accordingly climbed over the rail before him, stepped down into the House itself, and was proceeding to take his seat before he had taken the oath and without the preliminary of election. His manner of approach attracted attention. A messenger seized him and ran him

out. Brought before the Serjeant-at-Arms, he explained that, never having been in the House before, he was ignorant of the division of localities. He wanted to hear the Home Secretary, and finding a difficulty where he sat, thought he would just step down and take a seat a little nearer.

"AWAY WITH HIM."

A Peer on the Treasury Bench.

A member of the present Cabinet tells me he remembers an occasion when a stranger was discovered seated on the Treasury Bench itself. He walked boldly in, strolled up the floor, and settled himself in the corner seat by the gangway at the end of the Treasury Bench. (Here is the upright post against which Lord Kingsborough, when he was still with us as Lord Advocate, used to lean his back, and, so the ribald rumour went, invoke blessings on the head of the Duke of Argyll.) After sitting for a while, listening to the member on his legs, the stranger leaned over to the Minister close on his left hand, and in a loud whisper said, "When is Derby going to speak?"

It turned out that he was a peer of the United Kingdom, who had never visited Westminster since he succeeded to the peerage. Hearing that Lord Derby, at the time leading the Opposition in the Lords, was expected to make a big speech, he thought he would just look in. Following the stream he, being in the octagon hall, turned to the left instead of the right, and so entered the inner lobby of the House of Commons. Mention of his name to the doorkeeper would pass him on the supposition that he

was going to the Peers' Gallery. With the glass door before him giving access to the floor of the House, the rest was easy.

Another Prop of the Constitution withdrawn.

Mr. Herbert Gladstone, who in other matters besides those relating to the Parks is possessed of novel unofficial notions as to the right of the public to consideration, lent a sympathetic ear to complaints of the inconvenience of strangers turned out from below the gallery whenever a division was called. Possibly representations on the subject were the more potent by reason of the fact that this is the part of the House where seats are found for the private secretaries of Ministers and the heads of departments concerned in debates going forward. However it be, the First Commissioner had the seats fenced off from the House by a high rail, and then moved the repeal of the Standing Order which requires strangers to withdraw from these seats when the House is cleared for a division.

Mr. Bright's Court Dress.

"Dear Mr. Lucy," writes Mr. John A. Bright, "I see you say in *The Strand Magazine* that my father wore a Windsor, or Ministerial, uniform, but not a sword. He never wore a uniform, but was allowed by the Queen to wear a plain velvet suit with black buttons, which I now have."

To the vulgar mind it is, save as a matter of taste and suitability, a very small matter whether a man wears a Windsor uniform or a velvet suit. But this concession, a grave matter at a Court still dominated by German ideas of the sanctity of uniform, testifies to the kindly thoughtfulness of the Queen, and to her personal admiration for a statesman who, through a long period of his life, was anathema to good Conservatives. Incidentally it placed the President of the Board of Trade of 1868 at a considerable advantage over his colleagues. The ordinary Ministerial dress, a semi-military uniform, the origin of which tradition assigns to the late Prince Consort, is exceedingly uncomfortable on hot summer nights. The velvet suit, which in modified form

Mr. Bright wore, is built on the lines of the dress of the well-born Englishmen about the time of Sir Roger de Coverley. No handsomer dress is permitted to Englishmen than this velvet suit, with its ruffles at the wrist and front, its knee-breeches, its silk stockings, its shoes with silver buckles.

SIR RICHARD WEBSTER.

Amongst Ministers it is still worn by the Attorney-General, and pertains on State occasions to learned gentlemen who have filled that high office. Sir Richard Webster, Attorney-General in the late Government, has the further advantage of wearing with his Court suit the Ribbon and Order of the K.C.M.G., bestowed upon him in recognition of his services at the Behring Sea Arbitration. The Ribbon, Saxon blue with a scarlet stripe, is particularly effective over the black velvet, whilst the motto of the Order, *Auspicium melioris ævi*, comforts an ex-Minister as he paces the wilderness of Opposition.

Looking, the other day, over some old letters, I came upon a curious incident mentioned in one from Dr. Lyon Playfair, now Lord Playfair. It is dated July 1882, at which time he was Chairman of Ways and Means in the House of Commons. He mentions that he is "much engaged upon the highly respectable journal of 'Ways and Means,' into which a grower of champagne asks me to insert a commendatory notice of his vintage." This communication was probably accompanied by a proposal to furnish the Chairman of Committees with opportunities of personally verifying the excellence of the brand. On that point there is no testimony forthcoming. But the incident is instructive, as showing the view taken in foreign parts of our Parliamentary customs.

A rejected Advertisement.

If he has kept them, Lord Playfair must have a rare selection of quaint letters addressed to him in his varied public capacities. About six years ago he delivered in various parts of the country a series of valuable lectures on some bearings of Free Trade. These lectures brought him many letters from the unemployed. Some of the writers were convinced that their lamentable condition was directly due to the wide employment of machinery. One proposed that the armies of Europe might well be used for the purpose of a universal smashing up of machinery. Another suggested to Sir Lyon the organisation of a European association for the destruction of machinery, of which he was to be the president.

Lord Playfair as an Anarchist.

LORD PLAYFAIR.

The picture of Lord Playfair, probably on a coal-black charger, leading the armies of Europe in a raid upon miscellaneous machinery, appeals to the imagination with winning force.

It is fortunate for the House of Commons that the withdrawal from its precincts of Mr. Gladstone sees the growth and advance to prominence of Mr. Arthur Balfour. Mr. Gladstone, among his many claims to the esteem of the House of Commons, did more than any one else to maintain its antique tone of personal courtesy and high breeding. Mr. Balfour is not much more than half the age Mr. Gladstone had

A young Parliamentary Hand.

reached at the time of his retirement from the Parliamentary scene. Yet he has, in degree not possessed by any other member, that graceful and dignified manner, that instinctive reverence for the old traditions of the House of Commons, which marked Mr. Gladstone from first to last. This is a precious possession the House of Commons cherishes as something quite apart from politics. The peculiar gift is undefinable. Men who know the House of Commons intimately will recognise its inheritance by Mr. Balfour, and will possibly be able to name more than one prominent quarter in which otherwise supreme Parliamentary talents are marred by its conspicuous lack.

The Old Parliamentary Hand.

Mr. Gladstone, whilst he was yet with us, carried his reverence for the traditions of the House of Commons to extreme lengths, even in small matters. A few Sessions ago, he being at the time Prime Minister, a by-election was won in circumstances that created much jubilation in the Liberal camp. The new member, approaching to take the oath and his seat, was hailed with boisterous cheers. When he passed between the Treasury Bench and the table on which the roll of Parliament lay, one or two Ministers effusively shook hands with him.

Mr. Gladstone made no sign, but took an early opportunity, after the new member had taken his seat, privately to express to the Speaker his regret that the new comer should, with whatever kindly intent, have been waylaid on his progress towards the Chair. His view was that till a new member has been presented to the Speaker, and has by him been welcomed, it is indecorous for any one to interpose with friendly shake of hand. It is probable that hint of this matter was passed along the Treasury Bench, for a practice that at one time seemed established is intermitted, and to-day Ministers refrain from shaking hands with a new recruit on his way to be presented to the Speaker.

Once upon a time there used to be published at the close of each Parliamentary Session a volume setting forth

in detail the attendances of members upon divisions. The Buff Book, as it was called from the colour of its binding, was much in use at contested elections, where it was possible to show that a member offering himself for re-election was in respect of attendance on his duties no better than he should be. The Buff Book did not turn out a financial success, and to the secret relief of many members its publication was discontinued.

The Buff Book.

For Her Majesty's Ministers such a record is to this day diligently kept. Every week occupants of the Treasury Bench receive from the Whip's office a statement showing the number of times they have been present at divisions, the number of their absences, and the exact relative position in which they stand on the roll of honour or of dishonour. There are cases in which a Minister, usually one of the Whips, has taken part in every division of a Session. Several come within measurable distance of achieving this high distinction. On the whole, the weekly return acts as an incentive. But there are cases where its effect is deterrent. When a Minister, through illness or accident, gets altogether out of the running, he is prone to assume an attitude of desperation and withdraw from the competition.

CARDINAL VAUGHAN.

Cardinal Vaughan has visited the Lobby of the House of Commons once or twice this Session, but is by no means so constant in his attendance as was his predecessor's wont. More especially during the height of the Irish fight under the captaincy of Mr. Parnell, the spare figure of Cardinal Manning, with his pinched, bloodless, intellectual features, was as familiar in the Lobby as that of the average member. Standing apart, usually in the neighbourhood of the passage by the Bill

Two Cardinals.

Office, he held earnest conversation with a succession of Irish members. I remember the sensation created one night in the crowded lobby when a burly, devout Irish member, now no more, popped down on one knee and kissed the ring on the hand extended to him with quite other intent by the Cardinal.

THE LATE CARDINAL MANNING.

In personal appearance Cardinal Vaughan is wholly different from his predecessor, Mr. Gladstone's college companion of more than sixty years ago. One never saw Cardinal Manning without recalling a remark dropped by the Cardinal in *Lothair*. "I never eat and I never drink," said the prelate of fiction, for whose characteristics Mr. Disraeli was understood to have drawn upon a study at hand in London. Cardinal Vaughan does not look at all of that way of thinking.

The Lord Lieutenant of Ireland is never permitted to leave the island even for a day until certain dignitaries, including the Lord Chancellor, are solemnly sworn in to act in commission during his absence. This is a detail of constitutional law familiar to the public, since the swearing-in of the commission is regularly recorded in the Dublin papers. The Lord High Chancellor of England has patiently to bear even a harder lot without assurance of the silent sympathy of the nation. During his term of office he is not permitted to leave the kingdom. If he makes holiday, he must choose a locality somewhere within the boundaries of the island.

The Lord High Chancellor.

The reason for this restriction is that wherever the Lord Chancellor goes he must carry with him the Great Seal, and that is not to be trusted out of the country. This precious insignia of authority really consists of a pair of dies made

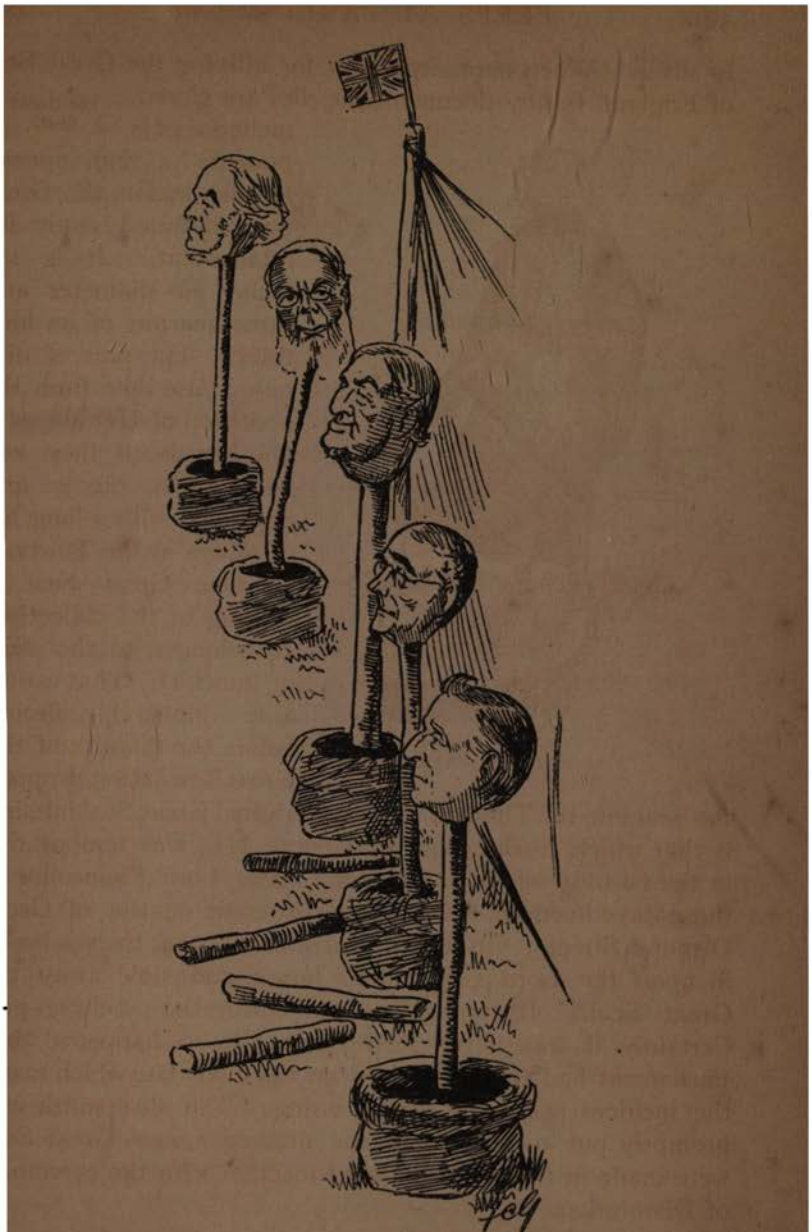
in silver. When necessity arises for affixing the Great Seal of England to any document the dies are closed, melted wax is poured in, and, opened in due season, the Great Seal is found ready for attachment. It is six inches in diameter and three-quarters of an inch thick. The pair of dies now in use date from the accession of Her Majesty. On her death they will be cut in pieces and deposited with a long list of others in the Tower.

The Great Seal.

A PRISONER OF STATE.

One Great Seal is lacking to the collection. It belonged to the reign of James II. That estimable monarch, fleeing before the thunder of the Great Revolution, dropped the Seal into the Thames. Another original Great Seal missing is that which, in the reign of George III., was temporarily in the custody of Lord Thurlow. The Lord Chancellor of those days lived in the now unaristocratic quarter of Great Ormond Street. On the 24th of March 1784, thieves broke in upon the Lord Chancellor's house and stole away the Great Seal. It probably went into the melting-pot. Certainly it was never seen again. It so happened that Parliament had to be dissolved on the next day, which made the incident peculiarly embarrassing. The silversmith was promptly put to work, and the dies of a new Great Seal were made in time for use in connection with the ceremony of Dissolution.

Amongst more substantial claims to distinction the late



HOME SECRETARIES: PAST AND PRESENT.

Lord Aberdare was, in the matter of family name, endowed with embarrassment of riches. His father passed a long life apparently in a state of uncertainty as to whether he should continue under the name he happened to bear at the moment, or whether he should look for another. When he was born, his patronymic was Knight. When he came to man's estate, Mr. Knight changed his name to Bruce. Thirty-two years later he called himself Pryce, and at the time of his death was known as Mr. John Bruce Pryce. When his second son, Henry, was in a position to choose his own name, he called himself plain Bruce. The family peculiarity was more happily developed in his case, since he worked his way up to a peerage and died Lord Aberdare.

Home Secretary: Old Type and New.

To recall the time when Mr. Bruce was Home Secretary, and roused the man in the street against Mr. Gladstone's Government by his introduction of the Licensing Acts, seems a page of history almost as remote as a chapter of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* Mr. Bruce, if he now sat in the House of Commons for Renfrewshire or elsewhere, would have no more chance of being made Home Secretary than he would of being nominated for the Primacy. The type is changed from Henry Austin Bruce to that of Herbert Henry Asquith. Yet it is only twenty-seven years come the 9th of December that Mr. Gladstone, then in the prime of manhood, as age is reckoned with him, attended Her Majesty in Privy Council and was sworn in First Lord of the Treasury, with Mr. Bruce a colleague at the Home Office.

The Privy Council room to-day is haunted by the ghosts of the majority who were on that occasion assembled. Lord Granville received the seals of office as Secretary for the Colonies; Lord Clarendon was Foreign Secretary; Mr. Cardwell was Secretary of State for War; Mr. Bruce, Home Secretary; Mr. Forster, Vice-President of the Council; Mr. Chichester Fortescue, Chief Secretary for Ireland; Mr. Lowe, Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Layard was First Commissioner of Works; and Sir William Page Wood, afterwards

Lord Hatherley, was Lord Chancellor. Mr. Bright, overcoming his repugnance to office, became, at Mr. Gladstone's urgent request, President of the Board of Trade. All, all are gone, the once familiar faces.

Of others present at this historic gathering only three in addition to the Chief are with us to-day, and for each a great deal has happened since then. On this 9th of December 1868, the Duke of Argyll was handed the seals of the India Office, Lord Hartington became Postmaster-General, and Mr. Childers First Lord of the Admiralty.

"How oft to-night," says Friar Laurence, in *Romeo and Juliet*, "have my old feet stumbled at graves." Mr. Gladstone, having lived longer than most men, cherishing a wider range of acquaintance than any, can hardly move through the passage of a day without his feet stumbling at the grave of a friend. If all the men he has personally known were gathered, say, in Westminster Abbey—if, indeed, the fullest limits of its walls would hold the multitude—what a varied and illustrious throng the ancient rafters would cover! Some of them sleep beneath the storied pavement. These and others of the glorious crowd being dead, yet speak through written records, in which they convey the impression created in their minds by Mr. Gladstone, they having known him at various phases of his life from the age of twenty to that of seventy. Monthly, almost weekly, the printing press pours forth autobiographies, recollections, remains, or biographies of more or less eminent men of the half century. Turning over the pages, Mr. Gladstone rarely fails to find himself for a moment face to face with his dead self at various stages of his long career—his self portrayed with the frankness with which we are all discussed behind our backs.

A haunted Man.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER XXIV

JULY

SOME weeks before Easter the occasional illness of Mr. Speaker Peel, alternating with an attack of influenza suffered by the Deputy Speaker, brought into sharp prominence the danger that ever hovers above the House of Commons consequent upon existing arrangements with respect to the Chair. As far as Committee of the whole House is concerned, there is nothing to fear in the way of interruption of business consequent on the illness of the Chairman of Ways and Means. He has a corps of Deputies formally appointed at the beginning of each Session. When Mr. Mellor has been temporarily absent from the Chair owing to sickness, or in search of an hour's much-needed rest, one or other of these gentlemen takes his place, and business goes forward without a hitch. The arrangement is desirable in many ways other than that for which it was originally designed. It is an admirable training school for budding Chairmen and possible Speakers. It is comforting to the House to discover what wealth of resource it has in this matter, since of the members accidentally selected for the post of Deputy Chairman, each has during this Session displayed peculiar aptitude.

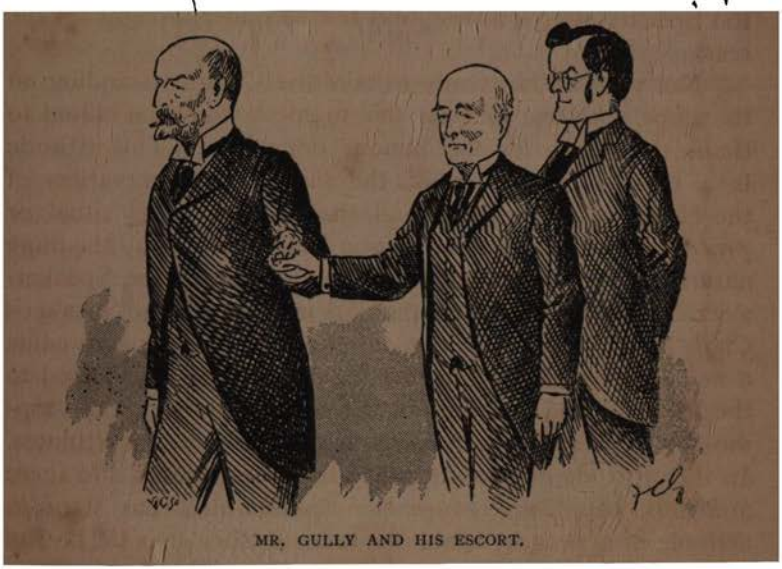
The vacant Chair.

With the Speakership matters are essentially different. When, shortly after the opening of the Session, Mr. Peel was confined to his house by indisposition, only Mr. Mellor might take the Chair. Supposing his health had failed at

this time, the House of Commons would have been obliged to close its doors, public business awaiting the convalescence of either the Speaker or his Deputy. Possibly even in such circumstances, supposing the term were not too far prolonged, the world would have gone round as heretofore, and the firmament would have looked on unwinking. Still, the crisis would have been a little ludicrous, the more deeply regretted because it would be so easy to reduce the possibility of its occurrence by nominating at least two Deputy Speakers.[1]

Interregnum.

The advances of the Speaker-elect to the full dignity and authority of the Chair are ordered with painful anxiety. His first approach is made when his election is declared, and his proposer and seconder are required to "take him by the hand and lead him to the



MR. GULLY AND HIS ESCORT.

Chair." In the House of Commons there are structural difficulties in the way of carrying out this injunction. In the case of Mr. Gully, he, awaiting the result of the contest for the Speakership, took up his quarters in his customary modest

[1] This was done in 1903.

retreat on a back bench behind Ministers. It was physically impossible for mover and seconder there to approach him, and, each taking a hand, trip up to the Chair as if they were going a-Maying. What happened was that Mr. Whitbread with difficulty threaded his way among members seated on the gangway steps and, "making a long arm," as they say in Cork, clasped Mr. Gully's outstretched hand, and so conveyed him to the table.

When Mr. Whitbread had conveyed his precious charge as far as the table, fresh difficulty presented itself. There was Mr. Birrell, the seconder, waiting to play his part in conducting the Speaker-elect to the Chair. But not two, much less three, members might walk abreast between the Treasury Bench and the table of the House of Commons. Accordingly, after a little hesitation, the proposer went first, the Speaker-elect followed, and the seconder brought up the rear.

Not yet was Mr. Gully to take the Chair. Standing on the steps, with one foot on the topmost flight, he halted to thank the House for the honour done him. This attitude is a curious illustration of the ingrained conservatism of the House of Commons in all that relates to its ritual or procedure. There was no reason in the world why the more natural course should not have been taken of the Speaker-elect standing squarely on the dais upon which the Speaker's Chair is set. Somewhere in the dim and distant ages came a new Speaker, with fine dramatic instinct, who, elected to the high position and led to the Chair, faltered on the topmost step overwhelmed by sense of his own unworthiness. In this attitude he stood humbly to return thanks, and there and thus, for all time since, the Speaker-elect has stood in attitude of approach, unable to take another step till he has unburdened his soul of the gratitude with which it overflows.

As soon as the Speaker-elect has made this little speech, always in the same words, passed on from lips long silent, he takes the last step and seats himself in the Chair. Meanwhile, pending the election of the Speaker, the Mace has been suspended on the hooks attached to the front, upon

which it reposes whilst the House is in Committee. The Speaker-elect being seated, the Serjeant-at-Arms advances, lifts the Mace, and places it on the table in token that the House is now in full Session. The consequent proceedings are commendably brief, consisting of the proposal "That this House do now adjourn."

THE SERJEANT-AT-ARMS.

Next time the Speaker-elect appears in the House of Commons he comes in semi-State. He is met in his room by the Serjeant-at-Arms, the Mace on his shoulder, accompanied by the Chaplain in full canonicals. He is attired in Court dress, with knee-breeches, silk stockings, silver-buckled shoes, and a bob wig of the kind barristers wear when pleading in court. A procession is formed, the Speaker coming first, the Serjeant-at-Arms and Mace following after. When the Speaker makes this daily journey his progress is announced by stentorian cry of "Mr. Speaker!" passed on from policeman to messenger. On his reappearance on the scene after his election, Mr. Gully was heralded with cry of "Mr. Speaker-elect!" a formula observed

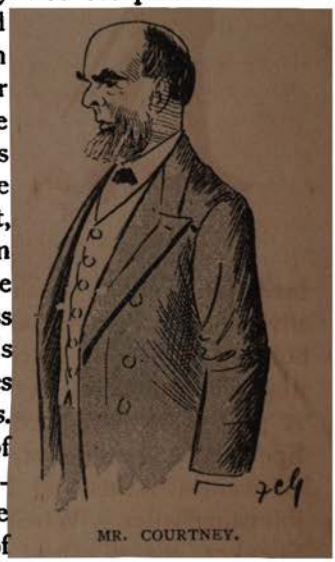
The Bob Wig.

THE NEW SPEAKER.

till he had been in the House of Lords and there, by the action of the Lords Commissioners, received "Her Majesty's Royal allowance and confirmation of the choice made by her faithful Commons." Thereafter he was "Mr. Speaker," and, exchanging the bob wig for a full-bottomed one, put on the flowing robe, which adds inexpressible but irresistible dignity to the office of Speaker.

Mr. Courtney's happy Thought.

It is a confession sad to make, but it is indubitably true, that business in the House of Commons would proceed much less smoothly if its deliberations were presided over by a gentleman attired in ordinary morning dress. This great truth is recognised in the case of the Chairman of Committees. He may not compete with the majesty of the Speaker in wig and gown. But he is required, when presiding in Committee, to appear in evening dress, even though it be a morning sitting. This monotonous regulation proved so irritating to the sensitive mind of Mr. Courtney that, midway in his career of Chairman of Ways and Means, he invented the famous blue coat with two brass buttons at the back, which still lends an air of culture to dinner tables and sometimes graces evening parties. To take part in the amenities of social life in the attire officially connected with his Parliamentary office was to invest life with a strain of unendurable monotony. With the famous buff waistcoat worn by day, and the blue coat with two brass buttons at the back by night, Mr. Courtney threaded his way through life with the quiet assurance that lapped the wandering Israelites in rest what time they beheld the sentinel cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.



MR. COURTNEY.

The late Sir Patrick O'Brien was not known to the

present House of Commons, which is its distinct loss. Of all the varied types with which the genius of Ireland diversified the Parliaments of 1874 and 1880, Pat O'Brien, as he was universally and affectionately known, was unique. I have heard Mr. Joseph Cowen speak of him as an effective Parliamentary debater, even an orator. That goes back to a date earlier than my personal acquaintance with the man who for nearly forty years uninterruptedly sat for King's County. Even in his late manner there were not lacking flashes of genuine eloquence. The pity of it was that their effect was obscured by lack of continuity, sometimes of coherency.

Pat O'Brien.

Imbued with reverence for Parliamentary forms and traditions, Sir Pat was one of the few Irish members who in the Parliament of 1880 dissevered themselves from Mr. Parnell's lead. Whilst that gentleman and the militant force of Irish Nationalists remained on the Opposition Benches, where the Dissolution had left them, Pat O'Brien, with Mr. Mitchell Henry, Mr. William Shaw, and two or three others, following ancient custom with Irish Liberals, crossed over in Mr. Gladstone's train. Sir Pat sat in the middle of the second bench behind Ministers, a position from which he was able to keep a scornful, though not always pellucid, eye on his countrymen below the gangway opposite. He was even more delightful to them than to the rest of the House, since he afforded opportunity of keeping up a chorus of interruption whilst he spoke. With hands thrust deep in his trouser pockets, his face sternly set in the direction of the Irish camp, sometimes his eye blazing with anger, often his lip curling with scorn at great thoughts not yet intelligibly expressed, Sir Pat was much to the fore in the Parliament of 1880-85. The younger Redmond, at that epoch much more grotesque than he remains after a considerable course of Parliamentary training, was ever an object of his most furious indignation.

"Humble animal as I am," he observed one night, with gesture of contempt towards the Parnellites, "I am not about to assume the character of a lion. If I were to do

so, I should select as my jackal the hon. member for Wexford" (Mr. W. Redmond).

"Why? Why?" shouted the delighted Radicals below the gangway.

"Why?" answered Sir Patrick, in a voice of thunder, "because I scarcely ever speak without his calling out 'Order!'"

"WHO CALLED ME A JACKAL?"

This, so precisely describing the functions and habits of the jackal, settled the matter.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor, not beyond suspicion of writing for a Dublin paper certain London correspondence in which the member for King's County was freely discussed, was another object of Sir Pat's fiery aversion. What lent a special charm to his assaults on the enemy was their unexpectedness. One night, contributing a luminous speech in Committee on the vote for the salary of National School teachers in Ireland, Sir Pat, looking across the floor, happened to observe Mr. O'Connor laughing. Like a flash of lightning he was upon him.

"As the modern Plutarch who writes in the *Freeman's Journal* says that I am generally unintelligible, of course a Plutarch at ten guineas a week must be a much greater man than a Greek Plutarch."

It was in this same debate that Sir Patrick, always effective in his gibes at the pecuniary relations of the Parnellite members with their constituents, and with what he described as "the great army of servant girls in the United States," ascended to what was, even for him, an incomparable flight of eloquence.

"All persons in Ireland," he said, oracularly nodding his head, "whether Orangemen or Nationalists, or Whigs or Protestants, or members of the faith—if any faith were left in the country—or whether they belong to that still larger number which is waiting upon Providence, waiting to see whether the wind will always blow from the west across the Atlantic—all these ought to unite in promoting education."

Whilst the puzzled House was trying to follow this line of thought, Sir Pat, raising his voice and solemnly shaking his forefinger at his compatriots opposite, continued: "The wind may possibly blow across the Atlantic in a way very unpleasant for some people, notwithstanding the grand vertebræ and the big faces that I have so often heard thrown in the teeth of the Irish race."

Challenges W. O'Brien to a Duel.

In these prosaic times it is forgotten how Sir Pat nearly forestalled Mr. Arthur Balfour in making an end of Mr. Wm. O'Brien. It was during the stormy Session of 1884. The House was still sitting, though the dawn of a midsummer day was struggling with the gas-light. The Bill under discussion dealt with the revision of jurors' and voters' list in the County of Dublin. Sir Pat had been dining out, and had, apparently, also been supping. It was three o'clock in the morning when he interposed, though on which side he spoke I forget, if indeed I ever was able to find out. His remarks being interrupted by Mr. T. Harrington, Sir Patrick turned aside to confide in the ear of Sir Arthur Otway (then in the Chair) the information that "Tim Harrington was carrying parcels at three-and-sixpence a week, whilst he (Sir Patrick) represented King's County in Parliament."

Subsiding for a short time, Sir Patrick waked up, and, looking across the House, his eye chanced to rest upon Mr. W. O'Brien, sitting half asleep. The more closely he regarded him the more certain he became that it was he, not Mr. Harrington, who, half an hour ago, had said something disrespectful about him. Sir Arthur Otway, rising to put the question that the clause under discussion stand part of the Bill, Sir Patrick jumped up, and thrusting

his hands deeper than ever in his pockets, said, in blood-curdling voice:

"Mr. Otway!" (It was too late at night for Sir Pat to remember that the Chairman of Committees had been knighted.) "The hon. member for Mallow just now interrupted me, and I desire now to give him an opportunity of explaining what he meant."

Then, leaning forward as if he would clutch at Mr. O'Brien's throat across the House, he shouted, "What do you want?"

Mr. O'Brien rubbed his eyes and began to wake up.

"What do you want?" Sir Pat shouted again. "What do you want?" he roared, for the third time of asking.

"If the hon. baronet," said Mr. O'Brien, in blandest manner and softest tones, "is at all curious as to what I mean, I will be glad to let him know some day in King's County."

"Sir Arthur Otway," said Sir Patrick, punctiliously including the Chairman of Committees in the conversation, and now remembering his title, "there is a much less distance than King's County at which the hon. member can ascertain what I think of him, and how I will deal with him."

Things beginning to look serious the Chairman sternly interposed, and Sir Pat was reduced to silence. But it was only temporary. The debate continuing, the Committee was from time to time conscious of a voice breaking in on the ordered speech of the member on his feet. "Afraid?" it inquired, in a loud stage whisper. Whenever, for the next quarter of an hour, there was a lull in the conversation, this whispered inquiry, "Afraid?" resounded through the House.

It came from Sir Pat, who, again leaning forward, was intently, with mocking smile, watching Mr. O'Brien, who severely ignored his existence. The Chairman interposing with increasing sternness, Sir Pat rose and slowly strolled down the House, pausing before the bench where Mr. O'Brien sat and beckoning him to follow. He spent some time in

the outer lobby, walking up and down like an angry tiger awaiting its evening meal. The O'Gorman Mahon chancing to pass, Sir Patrick engaged his services as a second; an arrangement of which he punctiliously informed Mr. O'Brien, taking it as a matter of course that he would make similar provisions on his own behalf. Judicious friends, interposing, got the irate baronet safely home, and Mr. O'Brien lived to suffer much in prison and, on his release, to carry on the Boulogne negotiations.

Modern Portraiture.

At the Royal Academy banquet Lord Rosebery gave utterance to a sentiment which found an echo in the breast of the distinguished gathering of painters who sat at table. "I venture to say," the Prime Minister declared, "that you will never have a satisfactory portrait gallery unless you are able to give commissions to living painters to paint living men."

The bearings of this observation lie in the application thereof. There are few living men whom painters would more gladly see sitting or standing before their easel than Lord Rosebery. And yet, in reply to incessant urgent entreaty, he will not supply the subject. I have the pleased and proud reflection that Lord Rosebery gave me the fullest proof of friendship when he went through the agony of sitting—or, to be more precise, of walking about—for his portrait to add to a little collection I long ago made upon the principle to which he gave pointed expression in his Academy speech. Doubtless he was, in this instance, beguiled by the

AT THE ACADEMY BANQUET.

promise that there should be no tiresome posing, no prolonged sitting. The artist would camp out with easel in his study in Berkeley Square, and paint him whilst he worked. This scheme has a double recommendation. Whilst it is the only one practicable for the collaboration of busy men, the portrait, when complete, is free from the aspect and pose inseparable from the ordinary circumstances of portraiture. Here is the living, breathing man, with just the expression into which his face fell when engrossed in his daily work.

In Lord Rosebery's case, as in some others dealt with in similar circumstances, the success of the experiment was complete. Only, as the painter confided to me, the task was one of peculiar difficulty and delicacy.

"If," said Mr. E. A. Ward, "Lord Rosebery when he walked out of the room (and he was always walking out of the room) hadn't shut the door after him, I could have got on much better. But you can't do anything with your subject at the other side of a closed door."

In this respect of distaste for being portrayed, either with brush or camera, Lord Rosebery much more closely resembles Lord Salisbury than he does his old chief and friend, Mr. Gladstone. There are many oil paintings and countless photographs of Mr. Gladstone. Lord Rosebery is the possessor of perhaps the most effective and picturesque—one in which Mr. Gladstone is painted in the scarlet robes of his University office. Another portrait, now hanging at Hawarden, was painted by Sir John Millais some six or seven years ago. It was a commission forthcoming from a subscription of the women of Great Britain and Ireland. Mr. Gladstone is represented having at his knee his grandson, the eldest boy of the late W. H. Gladstone. Still another portrait, by Holl, was given to Mr. Gladstone on the jubilee of his married life. With it was presented a portrait of Mrs. Gladstone, by Herkomer, the gifts being the offering of six-score old colleagues or close personal friends. The late Lord Granville, who at the private gathering at Spencer House was spokesman for the subscribers, remarked that whilst he had known Mrs. Gladstone during the whole of

Portraits of Mr. G.

the golden time that day celebrated, his acquaintance with Mr. Gladstone had extended to a longer period, of which the last thirty-five years had given him the distinction of being intimate as a personal and political friend, a colleague, and a loyal follower.

A portrait less well known, but of peculiar interest, is enshrined at Hawarden. It is by William Bradley, a name now forgotten, but in high repute sixty years ago. Painted ten years after Mr. Gladstone entered the House of Commons, at the time when he was still "the rising hope of stern,

THE PORTRAIT TRAP.

unbending Toryism," it presents a full-length figure, the arms folded, the fine, strong face, with its curate-like whiskers and abundant hair, set in deep thought.

The Desire of Mr. Herkomer's Heart.

Mr. Hubert Herkomer, R.A., has conceived a picture of Lord Rosebery which requires only the Premier's consent for realisation on deathless canvas. The scene is the Prime Minister's room in Downing Street. The particular effect, alluring to the painter of the wonderful Burgomaster picture in the Royal Academy of this year, is the view from the window. In his mind's eye, Mr. Herkomer sees the living picture. At the table, at work among a pile of letters and documents, sits the Prime Minister, the head being relieved by the dark wall at the back. From the left side window the light falls on the

face, Mr. Herkomer's quick eye, surveying the room, noting the possibility of a bit of charming cross-light from the right-hand window. It is from this window he would get the street scene, upon which he counts to make the picture unique among modern portraits.

"I feel inclined," he said, with a tear in his voice, "to paint the chamber and the scene even without a Prime Minister. But, of course, it would be nothing without the living figure."

Mr. Herkomer's idea, I should add, was conceived and communicated to me before Lord Rosebery's speech at the Academy banquet. The sentence quoted from that address seems to give peculiar point to the dream of the painter, and may even hold out promise of seeing it realised.

Amongst the luxuries by addition of which Mr. Herbert Gladstone, most diligent of First Commissioners, is endeavouring to vindicate the ancient claim of the House of Commons to be the best club in the world, is a contrivance whereby the names of successive speakers in current debate are signalled to the members' smoking-room. Being somewhat remote from the Chamber, members retiring thither run the risk of missing the utterance of a man whom they particularly desire to hear. The chance is not so constantly recurrent as to induce them to remain in attendance awaiting it. So they go off for a cigar, a game of chess, or a chat. Still, they would like to be assured that they are not missing anything, and this new device places them at their ease.

Exciting Moments in the Smoke-Room.

It is on the principle of the tape lines at the clubs, which tick out strips of paper on which are printed the names of winning horses at the Derby, the latest prices on the Stock Exchange, fresh changes of the Ministry in France, and other items of current news.

The scene in the smoking-room when the sudden ticking of the instrument signals that a name is about to be spelled forth is of never-failing interest. The latest orator has resumed his seat in the distant Chamber. The Speaker

has called upon another member. Who is it? All eyes are turned upon the instrument, laboriously, with much clicking, spelling out the name.

"B." Arthur Balfour, perhaps; he was expected a little later, but may now have got up.

"A." Yes, it's Balfour.

"R," clicks the instrument. No, it's Bartley; or Barran, some one suggests; or Dunbar Barton, says another.

"T." Ah; George Christopher Trout Bartley, for a shilling.

"L" "E." Yes, it's him.

"T" "T," goes the instrument, choking with emotion. Bartlett! No need to wait for the Ellis Ashmead. The smoking-room knows the man from Sheffield. Pipes and cigars are once more puffed with pleased assurance, and the game of chess goes forward with the certainty that it will not be interrupted for a good hour.

Pairing.

It is probable that before opportunity for carrying out his well-considered improvements closes for the present First Commissioner of Works, he will turn his attention to an inconvenience that bears heavily upon members nightly through a Session. It is the difficulty of obtaining pairs, either for the dinner-hour or for the current sitting. Probably, on the average of a night, there are a hundred men on either side who either have dinner arrangements, or, not being interested in the proceedings of the sitting, would like to clear out after questions are over. No division may be pending. But in order to avoid accidents it is necessary that members from either side temporarily withdrawing from the scene should be paired. The Whips do what they can to assist their friends, but there is no ordered system adequate to meet the necessity of the hour. Members, agonised by the near approach of their dinner engagement, wander about the lobby, pace the corridors, search through smoking-room, library, and newspaper-room for a pair.

It is quite possible, indeed it frequently happens, that a member may meet a friend from the other side forlornly bent on exactly the same errand. But there is no outward and visible sign about a man who wants a pair. Thus the two go by like ships that pass in the night. I once, somewhere, suggested that members in search of a pair should wear a rosette or bit of ribbon in their button-hole—say blue for Tory and yellow for Liberal. Coming together in such circumstances, two men would forthwith be made happy. The proposal, made half in jest, was, I believe, seriously considered. But nothing came of it.

"WE CAN PAIR YOU, MR. ALLAN, BUT WE CAN'T MATCH YOU."

A not less simple and perhaps more practical way out of the difficulty would be that a book should be placed in the library or reading-room, wherein a member desiring a dinner pair, or a pair for the night, might enter his name on one side of a double column; a member of the opposite party, consumed by identical desire, writing his name against it. Thus pairs would be settled with a minimum of inconvenience, the saving of much valuable time, and needless worry.

June 24. The Rosebery Ministry, defeated in the House of Commons by a majority of seven on what was known as the Cordite Vote, resigned, dissolved Parliament, and appealed to the country.

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